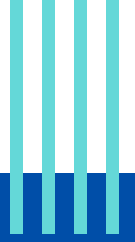




Strategic Plan 2023-2026



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Acknowledgement of Country

Our office is based on the land of the Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. We acknowledge and pay respect to their history, culture, and their Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge Aboriginal people as Australia's first peoples and as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water on which we rely.

We recognise and value the ongoing contribution of Aboriginal people and communities to Victorian life and how this enriches us.

We embrace the spirit of reconciliation, working towards the equality of outcomes and ensuring an equal voice.

For this land always was and always will be, Aboriginal Land.

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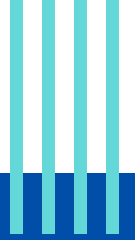
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Message from the Chief Executive Officer

Leading improvements that support patient safety and the delivery of high-quality clinical care is both the purpose and the heart of Safer Care Victoria (SCV). I am proud to lead an organisation that places consumers, people with lived experience, their carers, families and supporters at the centre of all we do.

Since its foundation in 2017, SCV has worked to support the Victorian community by upholding the safety of our healthcare system. We have achieved this by partnering with health services to drive a culture of continuous learning and improvement across the sector. We have made improvements to safety monitoring and reporting processes, listening closely to feedback from the sector and then supporting health services to understand and implement the resulting changes. We have partnered with front line staff in every corner of the state, to deliver a series of safety and improvement programs, transforming the quality of care and improving health outcomes for all Victorians.

As an organisation, we commit to demonstrating the same values of partnering, learning and improving, so that we may attain operational excellence and provide the best possible value to the taxpayer and to the health care system.

Following the release of the Targeting Zero report recommendations, Victorian health services have come a long way in a short period of time. We have achieved a great deal. Yet the business of safety is never complete and is defined by continuous improvement, which is our unrelenting focus for this strategy.

As Victoria's leading authority on healthcare safety and quality, we are privileged to have oversight of a range of information regarding safety in healthcare that others may not see. This intelligence has informed our future priority focus. Most importantly, we have also listened to and learnt from our diverse community, understanding what matters most. In developing this plan, we engaged with hundreds of stakeholders across Victoria, including health service CEOs, clinicians, allied health professionals, consumers and experts.

We plan to build on the excellence in safety that has grown within the Victorian system, and learn from the best practices of other jurisdictions and internationally, to ensure that high-quality governance is implemented across the Victorian healthcare system. While our work will place emphasis on acute care settings, it will span both public and private services, together with community, primary and aged care where indicated.

During the next three years we aim to develop a system that constantly monitors care in as close to real time as is possible. This will provide opportunity to identify risk of preventable harm in advance and underpin effective interventions that reduce that risk.

This strategy is the beginning of a new three-year programme designed to provide a safer healthcare system for all Victorians. To deliver this we will seek to influence policy that promotes safe care, we will support health service Boards and executives to strengthen their clinical governance processes, and we will work with consumers and clinicians to empower them to make changes in the system so that it provides better and safer care for all.

All Victorians have the right to expect and receive consistently safe and high-quality healthcare. We will work with you to deliver exactly that.

Professor Mike Roberts

Chief Executive Officer, Safer Care Victoria



Consumers are essential to building a safer healthcare system

At Safer Care Victoria (SCV), we elevate the role of consumers¹ in healthcare safety and quality, harnessing a diverse range of consumer perspectives to co-create better health care. This commitment also requires the cultivation of environments that encourage strong partnerships among health professionals, health services, and consumers to improve health outcomes for Victorians and the efficiency of our healthcare system.

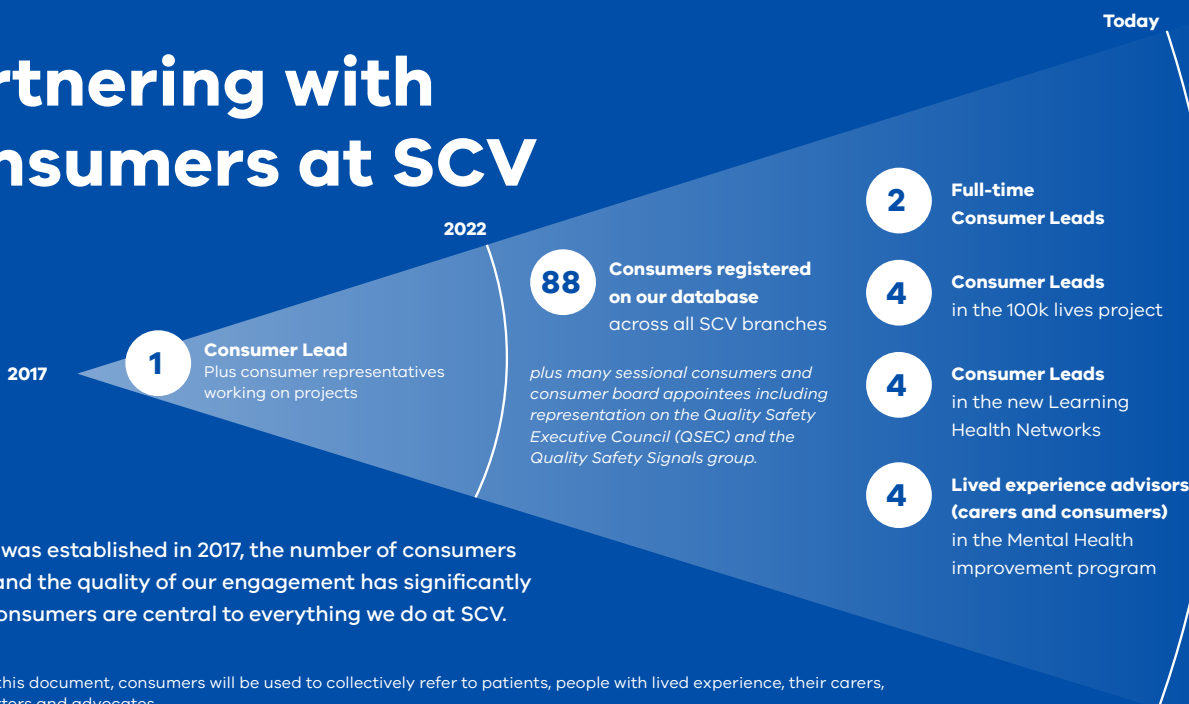
We strengthen the consumer voice as a legitimate source of expertise. More than just listening, we actively partner with consumers to identify, develop, deliver and evaluate the impact of our work. We know that understanding the lived experience offers the wealth of insight necessary to truly meet the healthcare needs of the community.

Since inception, SCV has expanded the depth and breadth of how we partner with consumers. As we look to the future we will build on this momentum and are excited about how closer partnerships with consumers will continue to empower the Victorians we serve.

“SCV is leading the consumer partnership journey and demonstrating to Victorian healthcare services that systems co-design and care quality and safety benefits flowing from such partnership is worth the investment. For our healthcare system to operate more safely and better for consumers, increasingly SCV and health care services will need to work with consumers to understand and co-create what is needed for consumer centred higher quality and safer care systems.”

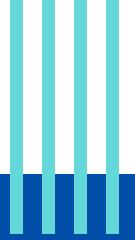
Consumer Lead,
Acute Care Learning Health Network

Partnering with Consumers at SCV



Since SCV was established in 2017, the number of consumers engaged, and the quality of our engagement has significantly evolved. Consumers are central to everything we do at SCV.

¹ Throughout this document, consumers will be used to collectively refer to patients, people with lived experience, their carers, family, supporters and advocates.



Our strategy at-a-glance

Vision

A safer healthcare system for all Victorians

Aim July 2023 to June 2026

To co-create a consistently safe and continuously improving healthcare system

Our Strategic Priorities (What we do)

1. Safety through leadership and reform

2. Safety through strengthening governance

3. Safety through proactive monitoring

4. Safety through effective intervention

Enabling principles (How we do it)

We partner

We partner with consumers, health care workers, and a diverse range of stakeholders to co-create a safer system of care

We learn

We gather and share the most important insights generated from system level evidence, data and lived experience

We improve

We support health services to adopt safety culture and continuous improvement as core change principles

We excel

We strive for operational excellence through a culture of continuous improvement



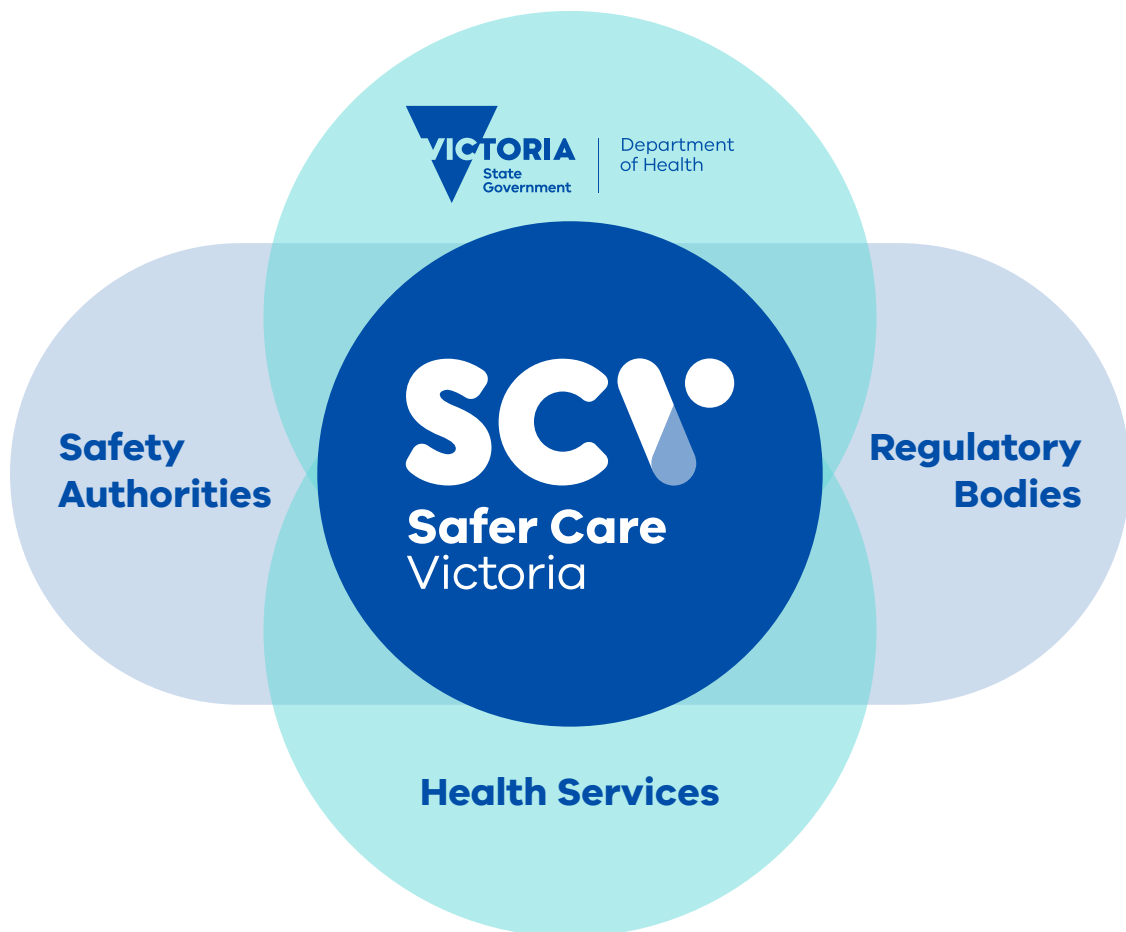
About us

SCV is an Administrative Office of the Victorian Department of Health (the department) and is Victoria's leading authority for quality and safety in healthcare. SCV was founded on the recommendations of the **Targeting Zero Report** which was developed in response to patient safety concerns.

SCV operates independently but 'alongside' the department, reporting directly to the departmental secretary. The SCV responsibilities are specified in a biennial **Statement of Expectations** by the Victorian Minister for Health. While we perform our functions independently of the department, we collaborate on areas of shared interest and consult to support good decision-making. Through legislation and departmental and ministerial delegations, SCV works in partnership with health services when there are concerns for public safety and is authorised to intervene in specific circumstances.

Since inception in 2017, SCV has established strong connections to drive safety improvements across the state. We have worked in partnership with health services, consumers, carers and their advocates, healthcare workers and key partners to develop and embed monitoring systems, supported targeted safety improvements and significantly increased improvement capability across the system.

Safer Care Victoria's roles and responsibilities



Why safety is our priority

Our state is home to some of the best health facilities and treatments in the world. However human error, system failures and avoidable harm are realities that every healthcare system must continually strive to prevent.

The Victorian Managed Insurance Authority states that up to 1 in 10 of the 2 million hospital stays may be affected by an adverse clinical event². While most preventable clinical incidents do not result in injury, it has been estimated that around 12 per cent of avoidable adverse events will result in serious physical or psychological harm, permanent disability or most tragically, death^{3,4}.

As Victoria's healthcare safety and improvement agency, we know that most harm can be prevented through embedded safety cultures that promote continually improving quality and safety systems and practices. With these systems and practices consistently in place, we will reduce common adverse events.

The pressures placed on our health care system since the pandemic, including increasing workforce demands and the consequence of delayed care, have further challenged safety and quality. Our health care workers have been under more pressure than ever before. A recent study into medical negligence compensation claims found that healthcare worker wellbeing was the primary determinant⁵. Therefore, improving worker wellbeing is a continued focus for SCV.

There are many examples of excellent care and service provision throughout Victoria's healthcare system. At SCV, we focus on learning from the best and safest providers as much as we learn from preventable harm events, to ensure our health services have the capacity and capability to translate best care into better patient outcomes every day.

Our work during the next three years is to make the system safer by listening to the lived experience of consumers and our front-line clinicians, improving our 'safety signal systems', spreading good practice and service improvements, and supporting the wellbeing of our health workforce.

"Being a clinical lead is an incredible opportunity to have input on a wide range of projects. With the development of the Continuing Care Learning Health Network has come the opportunity to learn from a broad range of consumers and clinicians to identify both problems and solutions to some of the biggest challenges in healthcare. Being the clinical co-lead for this with the consumer lead, has been an amazing opportunity to be part of making our health system better for all Victorians."

**Clinical Lead,
Continuing Care Learning Health Network**

² VMIA, *Better Patient Safety Strategy 2020-2024*

³ *Victorian Agency for Health Information* (sourced 2022)

⁴ Panagioti, M., Khan, K., Keers, R. N., et al. (2019). *Prevalence, severity, and nature of preventable patient harm across medical care settings: systematic review and meta-analysis*. *BMJ*. *BMJ* 2019;366:l4185: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.l4185> (Published 17 July 2019)

⁵ Bradfield OM, et al. *BMJ Open* 2022;12:e055432. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2021-05543



Our strategic plan

SCV is proud of the impact our work has on ensuring a safer healthcare system. We are singular in our focus to use this strategic plan to further strengthen our impact.

A safer healthcare system for all Victorians is our vision to unite the sector. It cannot be achieved in isolation. It must be driven by all of us.

Our ability to strengthen partnerships, learn from our networks, and improve and innovate in response to challenges, will be our driving force to ensure lasting change.

Our strategy was developed in this spirit. We consulted with consumers, carers, clinicians, healthcare workers and partner organisations to develop a plan for success.

In recognising the diversity of Victorians, we believe a safer system is a more equitable system. No matter who or where you are, you have the right to access safe high-quality healthcare.

We have defined a singular goal to guide our work.

From July 2023 to June 2026, we will support the co-creation of a consistently safe and continuously improving healthcare system.



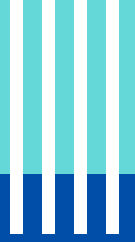
Our strategic priorities

SCV has developed four areas of strategic priority to focus our work for the next three years. These priorities will support the continued maturing of safety mechanisms in Victoria.

Our priorities will deliver:



This document sets out how our dedicated team will work, in partnership, to deliver on these critical priorities and improve safety and quality across Victoria.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1:



Safety through leadership and reform

We work locally and at every level of the system to influence safety improvement. We use our position as Victoria's leading authority for quality and safety in healthcare to advance national reform, share insights and strengthen our policy and legislative instruments. Our thought leadership and research practices place Victorian Health Services at the centre of global efforts to enhance safety and drive clinical best practice.

What we will do:

- Play an integral leadership role in national healthcare safety improvement endeavours and:
 - Collaborate to support development of national clinical standards and guidelines
 - Contribute to the national and international body of evidence, with new knowledge and research in healthcare safety and improvement
- Partner with the department to influence and implement health care policy and strategy
- Engage with Victoria's Chief Aboriginal Health Adviser to improve how we impact the lives of First Peoples
- Partner to strengthen the regulation of clinical practitioners and the supports provided to clinicians
- Continue and extend improvements arising from Victoria's recent healthcare safety and quality reviews, to embed consistent safety systems across Victoria

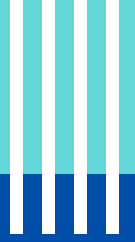


"Strong leadership at all levels is required to reorient the health care system to a system that enables and supports true consumer centred participation and involvement."

Consumer Lead,
Maternity and Newborn Learning Health Network

"One of the learnings I have enjoyed as a clinician working in the safety space, is that leadership is everywhere. It does not sit with one individual. So to further improve and excel, the health system must continue to encourage and nurture collaborative leadership across the entire network."

Clinical Lead,
Acute Care Learning Health Network



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2:



Safety through strengthening governance

Effective clinical governance is fundamental to ensuring safe and high-quality care. SCV will drive tailored and scaled clinical governance practices across Victoria's health services by ensuring collective and individual accountability and transparency for patient safety and care. Good governance is vital to safety culture, as it drives best practice and creates safe environments including culturally safe care settings for healthcare workers and consumers.

What we will do:

- Deliver a whole-of-sector leadership capability program (foundational to advanced) with a focus on clinical governance
- Develop a streamlined state-wide learning and training system to support Victorian clinicians
- Implement a state-wide portal for clinical staff credentialing and training monitoring
- Establish regional clinical governance that oversees thematic morbidity and mortality meetings to address regional safety and quality issues
- Support strong consumer representation at every health service including on Board committees in alignment with the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards

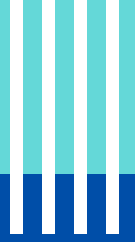


"Clinical governance is the responsibility of all those involved in the patient journey. It promotes improvement in the care we provide by learning from adverse events, monitoring performance against measurable outcomes, best practice peer review, and consumer feedback. Effective clinical governance identifies themes, strategic issues and opportunities for improved standards of care. It ensures reporting of safety and quality issues between craft group mortality and morbidity meetings, their individual health services and the health system as a whole."

Clinical Lead,
Perioperative Learning Health Network

"As a rural consumer 'safe high-quality care' in our local communities is critical in delivering services locally and building community confidence. Ensuring health service systems and processes are developed from the beginning with consumers will support a strong collective culture of safety and care within and across health services in Victoria."

Consumer Lead,
Maternity and Newborn Learning Health Network



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3:



Safety through proactive monitoring

We actively monitor the safety of our healthcare system to improve the quality of care and prevent patient harm. We work with our partners to source clinical intelligence and provide local, regional and state-wide monitoring of safety risks and trends. More effective data sharing and management will unlock our ability to monitor safety risks in real-time, enabling timely intervention and better health outcomes for Victorians.

What we will do:

- Partner to continually strengthen our centralised monitoring system of the most important safety and quality signals, including predictors of harm
- Utilise critical intelligence in clinical safety and governance to lead complex policy reform
- Monitor safety and quality data to detect early warnings signs of safety concerns
- Support health service Boards and executives by further developing, in collaboration with the Victorian Agency for Health Information, dashboards that monitor and provide oversight of best care, and identify hospital acquired complications
- In partnership with the Victorian Agency for Health Information, we will enable the consumer voice by developing a state-wide system to improve complaints analysis and to support health services to direct their efforts towards what matter most to consumers
- Utilise data to better inform clinical practice, particularly where unwarranted variation in safety outcomes is detected.

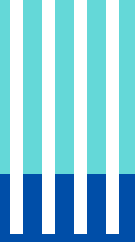


“Proactive rather than reactive data oversight - by working with experienced clinicians in the field - provides the best opportunities to capture and respond to early signals around safety and quality. Clinician and consumer input has helped focus efforts effectively on developing a relevant and contemporary data visualization tool that we hope will provide useful oversight and enable timely impacts on safety and quality issues at a health service level.”

Clinical Lead,
Cardiovascular Learning Health Network

“Data has never been more valuable than it is now and consumers want the safety and value of our data prioritised. SCV being proactive around what data is collected, why it is collected and how it is used will assist transparency of data value to consumers and support safety and quality improvement accountability.”

Consumer Lead,
Acute Care Learning Health Network



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4:



Safety through effective intervention

We are creating a continuously improving healthcare system that learns from, and acts to, prevent harm by driving system level change. Where there is a risk of harm occurring in our healthcare system, we intervene to prevent it from happening or to reduce the impact of that harm.

What we will do:

- Where predictors of harm are identified we intervene via a range of mechanisms, from reviews of individual events through to large scale transformative projects
- Utilise the legislative authority of the Chief Quality and Safety Officer to intervene where there is evidence of harm
- Harness our Learning Health Networks to reduce avoidable harm through the identification and sharing of best practice
- Partner to deliver themed analysis and learnings that inform proactive interventions to potential safety concerns
- We will support our Consultative Councils by considering their findings and implementing their recommendations, while supporting the spread of best practice through our Learning Health Networks



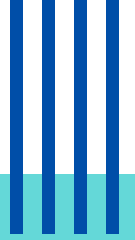
“Consumers who are harmed have a right and a critical role to play in helping investigate the event that caused their harm. They often have information of value to review teams that might not be available through other sources, and which might therefore remain unknown.

By helping to develop resources for health services in involving impacted consumers in this space, I believe we’ll start to see more powerful, lasting, system-wide improvements.”

Consumer Lead,
SCV Academy

“The maternity sector has embraced improvement by participating in several collaboratives over the last few years. Evaluations showed that the improvement work prevented harm to women birthing in Victoria by reducing severe perineal tears, postpartum haemorrhage and even stillbirth. The collaborative work has also had the benefit of introducing staff to recognised improvement methodology. It’s so exciting to see health services using their new knowledge of improvement science to implement and sustain change.”

Clinical Lead,
Maternity and Newborn Clinical Health Network



Enabling principles

These interconnected principles inform how we approach all that we do, reflecting our knowledge and experience and representing critical factors for success in safety.

We partner

Partnership underpins the success of our work and our impact on the Victorian healthcare system. We partner with a diverse range of people and organisations in the spirit of shared understanding, joint oversight and collaborative effort. We do this to co-develop, to prioritise, to influence, to amplify individual and collective voice including in support of First Nations self-determination, and to align efforts to improve the safety of care across Victoria.

We listen to and work with consumers to amplify their experience and deepen our collective understanding and impact. We recognise that not all health outcomes are equitable, and that some groups are disadvantaged within the current system. We strategically partner to hear, support and improve outcomes for groups who encounter systematic barriers to quality care particularly women and young people, First Nations people, people with mental health conditions, older people, those living with disability and our culturally and linguistically diverse populations. When partnering with First Nations people we will honour their requirements for data sovereignty.

We learn

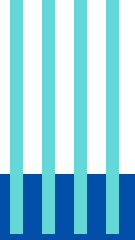
Learning at SCV is the process of gaining new skills, deepening our knowledge and understanding, being receptive to different ideas, evolving culturally safe practices, and being open to change and growth. To continuously improve the healthcare system, we will support collective learning within an environment of mutual respect – we will learn from our successes, learn from mistakes and learn from others. SCV adopts a just culture and encourages a learning health system focused on improvement and open learning. Using a strength-based approach we distil insights, harness learnings, and co-create, test and refine approaches for system level change.

We improve

Safety is about acting on what we know and continually striving to ensure the best outcomes for Victorians. At SCV we work with the health sector to adopt a 'patient safety movement' and culture of continuous improvement. This singular vision is supported by strong governance and stewardship, and a commitment to openness, support and learning. We will ensure safety improvement is not only a focus today but is embedded across the system to deliver a bright future.

We excel

We are unrelenting in our common purpose to consistently improve the safety of the Victorian health care system. We believe that excellence is in our grasp and that excellent healthcare is achievable for all Victorians. We will do what we ask others to do – provide a positive workplace culture and support the wellbeing of our people whilst continuing to set our sights and expectations high. This means being tough on our priorities, determining the best structure to excel, having effective organisational processes, collaborating across our work streams and partnerships without siloed thinking and continuously adapting to new contexts and challenges – both internally and externally.



"As a Clinical Lead, I really value the opportunity to partner with, and learn from, my Consumer Co-Lead. This collaborative leadership is a wonderful reforming step to enable improvements and excellence in the safety and quality of healthcare."

Clinical Lead,
Acute Care Learning Health Network

"Consumer involvement in recent work on the development of a data dashboard has resulted in the production of 'plain language' descriptions of proposed data measures, along with 'what does this mean for consumers' statements."

Consumer Lead,
Cardiovascular Learning Health Network

"Partnering with consumers is a core value for SCV and evidence shows better outcomes (for projects and services) when co-design and co-production with consumers are standard business within organisations."

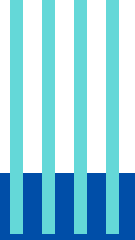
Consumer Lead,
Cardiovascular Learning Health Network

"The consumer perspective I have been able to contribute has resulted in broadening the planned improvement program work to ensure at a local health service level consumers are engaged and included in the activity."

Consumer Lead,
Maternity and Newborn Learning Health Network

"The consumer voice provides a different perspective from the clinicians, important for balance in the work, research and projects as the consumer is the recipient of outcomes. It is important to hear this voice".

Consumer Lead,
Continuing Care Learning Health Network



Measuring our impact

We are committed to measuring our success and the impact we have. During the life of this strategy, we aim to create a system that provides care that is safer, more effective, person-centred, timely, efficient and increasingly equitable. This will be achieved by delivering work across the scope of our accountabilities:



The development and implementation of a comprehensive state-wide safety and quality dashboard



Those supporting the department's annual service delivery performance measures, as they relate to our work⁶



Programs we have been commissioned to deliver to meet specific outcomes



The delivery of government election commitments that SCV is accountable for

We will detail our workplan and strategic initiatives in our Annual Plans and report on our key achievements and challenges in our Annual Reports during this strategic cycle - 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2026. These can be found on our website publications page at [Publications | Safer Care Victoria](#).

"Providing a clinician perspective is not just a platform, but a responsibility to advocate for my patients and for solutions to challenges in the health system. The last few years in health have been unlike any other and we are at a unique moment for a clear focus on how to best serve the people of Victoria. I am particularly interested in equity and acting on social determinants of health to ensure that everyone in Victoria can enjoy the best health possible."

**Clinical Lead,
Continuing Care Learning Health Network**

⁶ Refer to *Budget Paper 3: Service Delivery* at: [Budget papers | Victorian Budget 23/24 | Victorian Budget](#)

Appendix 1: Definitions

Consumer - patients, persons with lived experience, carers, families, supporters and advocates.

Consultative Councils - Consultative Council on Obstetric and Paediatric Mortality and Morbidity, Victorian Perioperative Consultative Council, Victoria Assisted Dying Review Board.

Department - Victorian Department of Health.

Expert - academics, researchers and other interested parties that we seek advice from.

Healthcare workers (clinicians is used interchangeably) - Australian Health Professional Regulation Agency regulated and self-regulated health care workers, allied health professions including therapies and sciences⁷, Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Health Practitioners, doctors, General Practitioners, midwives, nurses, physicians, surgeons.

National bodies - Australian Commission for Safety and Quality in Healthcare (ACSQH), Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association (AHHA), Australian Health Professional Regulation Agency (AHPRA), Australian Institute for Health and Welfare (AIHW), Institute for Healthcare Improvement - Asia-Pacific (IHI), Victorian Managed Insurance Authority (VMIA).

Learning Health Network (LHN) - SCV has established six LHNs, which bring together clinicians, people with lived experience, data experts, academics and healthcare improvement specialists to use evidence to improve clinical care and patient outcomes across respective areas of healthcare.

The six LHNs are the Acute Care LHN, Cardiovascular LHN, Continuing Care LHN, Maternity and Newborn LHN, Mental Health LHN, and the Perioperative LHN.

Patient safety culture - Patient safety culture is focused on the aspects of organisational culture that relate to patient safety. It is defined as a pattern of individual and organisational behaviour, based upon shared beliefs and values that continuously seeks to minimise patient harm, which may result from the process of care delivery⁸.

Stakeholder - Clinicians, consumers, health service Boards and executives, professional colleges and organisations, experts.

SCV - Safer Care Victoria.

Preventable harm in healthcare - Negative outcomes related to identifiable and modifiable causes. Serious harm or a Serious Adverse Patient Safety Event (SAPSE) is defined as physical or psychological harm which results in long term injury, permanent disability or death. Other categories of serious harm are the nationally defined Hospital Acquired Complications (HAC) or Sentinel Events (SE), which contain the most serious classifications for reportable and preventable cases of harm.

⁷ Allied health professionals - refer to full list at: <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/allied-health-workforce/allied-health-professions>

⁸ Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC) (2023) *About patient safety culture*, ACSQHC website, accessed 01 July 2023.