

SCV Annual Plan 2026–27

OFFICIAL

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Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.

© State of Victoria, Australia, Safer Care Victoria, October 2026 (2606603)

ISSN 2208-6927 - Online (pdf/word)

Available at the [Safer Care Victoria website](https://www.safercare.vic.gov.au) <<https://www.safercare.vic.gov.au>>



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Acknowledgement of country

Safer Care Victoria acknowledges the strength, power and resilience of Aboriginal people as members of the world's oldest living culture. We recognise Aboriginal people as Australia's First Peoples and honour the richness and diversity of all Traditional Owners across Victoria.

We respect the lore, customs and languages practised by Aboriginal people in Victoria and their deep spiritual and cultural connections to land and water. We are committed to a future based on equality, truth and justice and recognise the ongoing systemic injustices faced by Aboriginal people. Victoria's treaty and truth-telling processes offer a chance

to address these wrongs, empowering Aboriginal people to make decisions for their communities.

We pay our deepest respects to ancestors, Elders and leaders, past and present, whose strength and fortitude have paved the way for future generations.

Acknowledgement of lived experience

Safer Care Victoria acknowledges the consumers, families, carers, friends and loved ones who have experienced, or have been affected by, harm across the system. We are deeply sorry for their distress and grief. We bear witness to their stories in the sincere hope of improving care for others.

Acknowledgement of contribution

Safer Care Victoria succeeds because of the collective efforts of consumers, clinicians, health sector partners and our staff. Through collaboration, we have identified opportunities for improvement, strengthened healthcare performance monitoring and developed effective responses to safety concerns.

We are deeply grateful for the expertise, skill and strategic insight contributed by leaders across health care, academia and the safety and improvement community. Your input has shaped vital system advancements and forged the connections necessary to deliver safer, more effective care across services and agencies.



Abbreviations used in this document

Abbreviation	Definition
ATP	Australian Teletrial Project
CCOPMM	Consultative Council on Obstetric and Paediatric Mortality and Morbidity
MARAM	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (framework)
The MHIP	Mental Health Improvement Program
SCV	Safer Care Victoria
The department	Department of Health
The formulary	Victorian Medicines Formulary
VPCC	Victorian Perioperative Consultative Council



Introduction

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A message from our CEO

It is my pleasure to present Safer Care Victoria's Annual Plan 2026–27. This year marks an important milestone, with both the conclusion of our strategic plan 2023–26 and 10 years since Safer Care Victoria was established. I am proud of what we have achieved together and of the sustained impact we continue to have on the quality and safety of care for Victorians.

Over the past year, I have heard directly from health services, clinicians, consumers and system leaders about what matters most. There is a shared commitment to safer care, alongside a clear expectation that we go further. This includes supporting care that is safe, effective, person-centred and equitable – and delivered consistently across the system.

In response, we are evolving our approach through Safer Together, strengthening how we partner with and support the sector to drive system-wide improvement. This reflects a deliberate shift to a more connected and collaborative model, aligning effort around shared priorities to deliver better outcomes for Victorians.

At the heart of this is our commitment to a learning health system. We aim for a system where evidence, data and lived experience inform decisions, and where learning is actively translated into practice and shared at scale. This is how we move from isolated effort to collective impact, while continuing to recognise the importance of local leadership and context.

Through this approach, we are strengthening the foundations that enable better care. These include clinical governance, partnering with consumers and a culture of continuous improvement. We are working alongside health services to translate insight into action and to scale what we know makes a difference.

In 2026–27, our focus is on embedding this way of working while continuing to deliver high-impact initiatives. This includes implementing the Victorian Medicines Formulary, accelerating evidence-based improvement through a partnership with Local Health Service Networks, refreshing the Partnering in Healthcare Framework, and continuing to strengthen clinical governance.

We will publish the *Sentinel Event Annual Report* and update key policy and related resources to reflect emerging risks and system learning, including insights from recent maternity, neonatal and paediatric reviews. We will also progress the Health Complaints Commissioner transition into Safer Care Victoria and support more equitable access to clinical trials through initiatives such as the Australian Teletrial Program, improving standard of care by embedding clinical trials across Victoria. Equity remains central to this work. We are committed to improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and all Victorians.

We are delivering this in a constrained environment, making it even more important that we are focused, connected and working in partnership. Safer Together provides a clear and deliberate path forward, aligning effort, strengthening clinical governance, capability and ensuring that learning is shared and sustained across the system.



I thank the staff of Safer Care Victoria, and our partners across the system, for your ongoing commitment and collaboration. Together, we will continue to strengthen quality and safety and enable improved outcomes for all Victorians.

A stylized blue ink signature of Louise McKinlay.

Louise McKinlay

Chief Executive Officer, Safer Care Victoria
Chief Quality and Safety Officer Victoria

About us

Safer Care Victoria (SCV) is the lead quality and safety improvement agency for healthcare across the state.

We were established as an Administrative Office of the Victorian Department of Health (the department) in 2016 following recommendations made to the Victorian Government in the [Targeting Zero Report](#) in response to patient safety concerns.

Our role

SCV's primary focus is quality and safety improvements within state publicly funded health services. We also provide support across the sector, including private providers that are regulated by the department. We work with health services, the department, clinicians, consumers, carers, safety bodies, research bodies and other key stakeholders.

We focus on quality and safety so that we can work with health services to deliver care that is safe, timely, effective, efficient and person-centred. We do this by:

- driving large scale improvements across the sector
- identifying opportunities for reducing avoidable harm and unwarranted variation in care
- strengthening capability in clinical governance, improvement science and safe and just culture
- providing insights, resources and support to health services
- supporting translational research and clinical trials in health services and universities to drive evidence-based improvements into practice.

SCV's full responsibilities are outlined by the Victorian Minister for Health in a triennial [Statement of Expectations](#).¹



1. <https://www.safercare.vic.gov.au/publications/statement-of-expectations>

Our strategic plan

The background of the slide features several overlapping, semi-transparent light blue shapes. These shapes include large circles and curved, organic forms that create a layered, abstract composition. The colors are various shades of light blue, ranging from a very pale, almost white tone to a slightly more saturated blue. The overall effect is clean, modern, and minimalist.

Our Strategic plan 2026–29

In September 2026, we launched our new strategic plan for 2026–29, setting out our vision, aim, and strategic priorities for the next 3 years.

The full strategic plan can be found on the [SCV website](https://www.safercare.vic.gov.au/about-us/plans-and-reports).²

Safer Care Victoria is the state lead for quality and safety in publicly funded health services and across the sector

We drive improvements in partnership with health services, the department, clinicians, consumers and carers, safety bodies, research bodies and other key stakeholders.

Vision:

what we aspire to

A better, safer healthcare system for all Victorians

Aim:

the specific goal we intend to accomplish to fulfil our vision

Over the next 3 years, we will continue to work with our partners to drive quality and safety healthcare improvements across Victoria

Strategic priorities:

the key areas we should focus on to help us realise our aim

Leadership

Strengthen clinical governance, national reform opportunities, state-wide initiatives, and partnerships with health services and consumers.

Insights

Harness system data, lived experience, research and frontline insights to identify and share quality and safety opportunities.

Improvement

Enable a learning health system that continuously evolves, drives whole system quality, a strong safety culture and improves system sustainability.

Under each strategic priority, we articulate:

Objectives

where we invest our effort and time

Measuring impact

what success looks like

Enabling principles:

how we approach all that we do

We partner

by collaborating with diverse stakeholders to align our efforts, develop priorities, influence change, share insights, listen to individual and collective experiences.

We learn

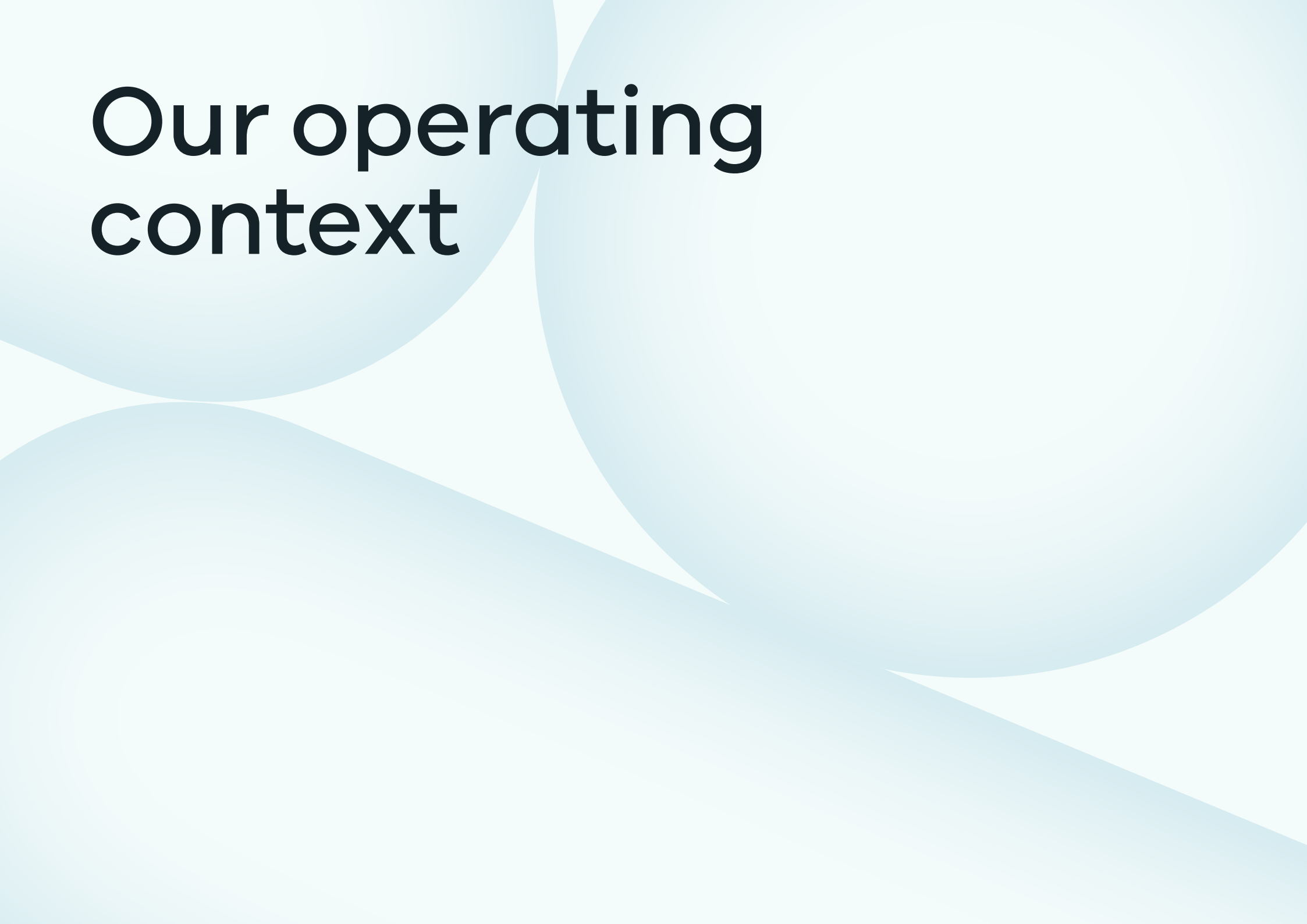
by building, deepening, and sharing skills and knowledge, and embracing diverse perspectives to support a continuous learning health system.

We improve

by acting on what we know, building capability, and embedding a culture of continuous improvement: supported by strong governance, responsible stewardship, and openness.

2. <https://www.safercare.vic.gov.au/about-us/plans-and-reports>

Our operating context

The background of the slide features several overlapping, semi-transparent light blue shapes. These shapes include large circles and curved, organic forms that create a layered, abstract composition. The text 'Our operating context' is positioned in the upper left area, partially overlapping one of the blue shapes.

Our operating context

Funded programs and activities

In 2026–27, we are continuing to deliver on key funded programs and activities.

Safer Together learning health system

Safer Together is our vehicle for building a learning health system in Victoria. It brings together consumers, clinicians, health services and system leaders around shared priorities to improve the safety, quality and sustainability of care for Victorians.

Grounded in learning health system principles, Safer Together coordinates the generating, sharing and application of evidence, data and lived experience to improve care. Through regional partnerships with Local Health Service Networks and health services statewide, it supports shared learning, local adaptation and system-wide scaling of what works.

This approach provides the foundation for statewide improvement across 4 priority domains:

- reducing avoidable harm
- reducing avoidable admissions
- quality use of medicines
- value-based health care.

In 2026–27, our focus is on embedding Safer Together as the way of working across the system, while continuing or expanding initiatives that have demonstrated early impact, including improving surgical and maternity care, and progressing innovation in high-priority areas such as reducing avoidable admissions.

Australian Teletrial Program

The Australian Teletrial Project (ATP) was funded by the Australian Government under the Medical Research Future Fund infrastructure grant. The grant provides opportunities to improve access to, and participation in, clinical trials for people living in regional, rural and remote areas.

ATP is conducted through the establishment of Regional Clinical Trial Coordinating Centres in the Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia. In Victoria, the Regional Clinical Trial Coordinating Centre is located within SCV and is responsible for implementing the ATP in Victoria.

ATP-Vic is a centralised service that helps Victoria's regional, rural and remote health services with the support, policies and workforces they need to bring clinical trials and teletrials closer to home.

Teletrials were originally developed to improve access to clinical trials for cancer patients in rural and remote areas. They have since proven to be effective for all types of clinical trials. Teletrials aim to improve the equity of access for clinical trials for underserved populations and to enhance the diversity of trial participants.



Mental Health Improvement Program

The Mental Health Improvement Program (MHIP) sits within Safer Together, our vehicle for building a learning health system in Victoria. The MHIP leads priority mental health reform to improve the safety, quality and experience of care across Victoria's mental health and wellbeing services. The MHIP was developed in response to recommendations from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System. It is a key component of the quality and safety framework for the mental health system.

The MHIP partners with consumers, carers, families and supporters, mental health and wellbeing services, the workforce and sector leaders. It applies a learning health system approach to design, test, refine and scale improvement. With lived and living experience leadership embedded throughout, it strengthens workforce capability, supports locally led improvement and builds shared learning across the system.

The MHIP delivers targeted initiatives to improve safety and experience of care by:

- eliminating restrictive practices
- improving sexual safety in mental health inpatient units

- supporting Victorian health services to adopt the Zero Suicide Framework
- reducing compulsory treatment orders
- fostering the MHIP Community as a statewide learning health network within the Safer Together learning health system.

In the next phase, the MHIP will deepen partnerships to generate, share and apply evidence, data and lived and living experience insights, strengthen the evidence base, and embed improvement and lived and living experience leadership as core to mental health reform across Victoria.

Victorian Medicines Formulary

The Victorian Medicines Formulary (the formulary) is a major system reform led by SCV, in partnership with HealthShare Victoria, to establish a single, evidence-based medicines formulary across Victorian public health services. It will improve equitable access to medicines, support more consistent prescribing, and strengthen the sustainability of the health system.

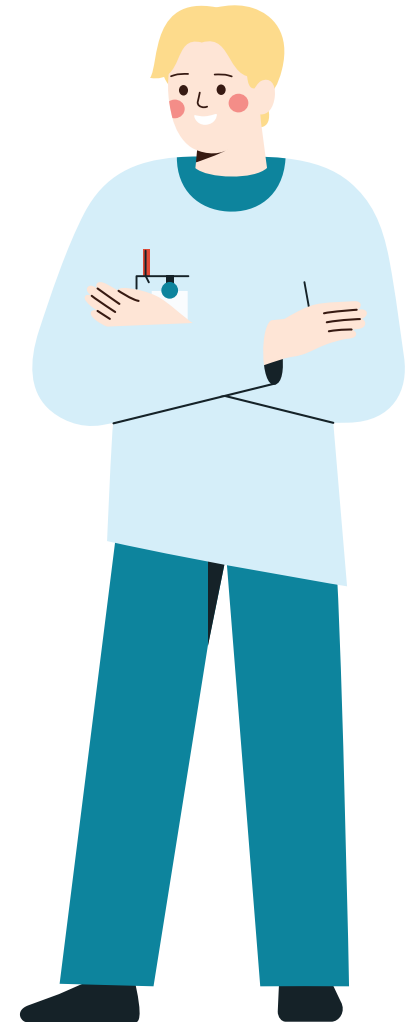
The formulary is more than a list of medicines. It introduces a consistent, statewide approach to how medicines are governed, evaluated, and used,

underpinned by transparent, clinically led decision-making and value-based procurement.

The reform will deliver safer, fairer and more consistent use of medicines by:

- reducing unwarranted variation in prescribing while preserving appropriate clinical choice
- strengthening clinically led, statewide decision-making on medicines use
- improving equitable access to safe and effective medicines for all Victorians
- strengthening medication safety through more consistent and evidence-based use supporting value-based care by ensuring more efficient and coordinated use of resources across the system.

The formulary will be developed and implemented in partnership with clinicians, health services and system partners, building on existing expertise and ensuring the model reflects the needs of the Victorian health system.



Supporting statutory bodies

We support 2 statutory bodies that operate under legislation. The Minister for Health appoints these bodies to monitor and provide advice to SCV and the minister on their respective areas of expertise.

Consultative Council on Obstetric and Paediatric Mortality and Morbidity

The Consultative Council on Obstetric and Paediatric Mortality and Morbidity (CCOPMM) advises the minister and the department on obstetric and paediatric issues. CCOPMM's functions are outlined in the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* (the Act) and include:

- investigating the incidence and causes of maternal deaths, stillbirths and the deaths of children aged under 18 years
- investigating the incidence and causes of obstetric and paediatric morbidity
- collecting perinatal data to provide information about perinatal health (including birth defects and disabilities)
- undertaking other functions as specified in s 46 of the Act.

CCOPMM publishes an annual report. Find out more about CCOPMM on the [SCV website](http://www.safercare.vic.gov.au/about/ccopmm).³

Victorian Perioperative Consultative Council

The Victorian Perioperative Consultative Council (VPCC) was established as a multidisciplinary council in 2019. The VPCC identifies improvement opportunities in perioperative care and shares these with the health sector. The VPCC monitors the safety and quality of surgical care in Victoria before, during and after surgery.

The VPCC also operates under the Act.

The VPCC is supported in its functions by a surgical subcommittee, in collaboration with the Victoria Audit of Surgical Mortality and an anaesthetic subcommittee, to:

- identify lessons from surgical care that are deemed preventable
- classify surgical death in Victoria to identify systemic issues that could contribute to mortality
- review cases to better understand factors contributing to anaesthesia-related morbidity and mortality
- recognise aspects of care that were effective in preventing or reducing harm
- identify emerging safety signals in delivering perioperative care.

VPCC publishes an annual report. Find out more about VPCC on the [SCV website](https://www.safercare.vic.gov.au/councils/vpcc).⁴

Figure 1: SCV's relationships with key stakeholders



3. <http://www.safercare.vic.gov.au/about/ccopmm>

4. <https://www.safercare.vic.gov.au/councils/vpcc>

Our priorities

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Our priorities in 2026–27



Leadership

As Victoria's lead for quality and safety, we work to improve care across the state by providing and enabling leadership and influencing reforms nationally.

We advance national reform opportunities, deliver statewide initiatives, strengthen clinical governance and promote equitable representation for consumers, carers and people with lived and living experience of all backgrounds and experiences. We share evidence-based insights and work with our partners to break down silos and combine our efforts to improve healthcare for all.

The *strategic plan 2026–29* sets out our objectives to:

- advocate for and provide expertise on quality and safety reform opportunities, driving alignment across national, statewide and health service partners
- lead transformational, system-wide initiatives to optimise outcomes that are consistent, reliable and equitable for all Victorians
- promote and share evidence-based information and clinical best practice to the sector, consumers and carers
- advocate for consumer and carer representation across the health system in alignment with the [National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards](https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/national-standards/nsqhs-standards)⁵ and the [Victorian Clinical Governance Framework](https://www.safercare.vic.gov.au/best-practice-improvement/clinical-governance/framework).⁶

At the end of our 3-year strategic plan, we'll know our impact by:

- satisfaction indicators from those involved in quality and safety programs and training
- positive outcomes of quality and safety capability development
- delivery of government election commitments that SCV is accountable for.



5. <https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/national-standards/nsqhs-standards>

6. <https://www.safercare.vic.gov.au/best-practice-improvement/clinical-governance/framework>



Key initiatives

Our focus	During 2026–27, we will:	Aligned objectives
Victorian Medicines Formulary	Establish statewide clinical governance and commence implementation of a statewide medicines' formulary to: - improve equitable access - support consistent prescribing - strengthen sustainability through the Safer Together learning health system approach.	Lead transformational, system-wide initiatives to optimise outcomes that are consistent, reliable and equitable for all Victorians.
Elevate partnering with consumers	Strengthen partnering practices and outcomes through the: - launch of a refreshed Partnering in Healthcare Framework - development of supporting resources - embedding patient experience insights to inform improvements.	Lead transformational, system-wide initiatives to optimise outcomes that are consistent, reliable and equitable for all Victorians.
Strengthen clinical governance	Improve clinical governance through: - aligning Victorian and national clinical governance reforms - embedding the Victorian Clinical Governance Framework - triangulating system signals and insights to inform clinical governance tools, supports and interventions.	- Advocate for and provide expertise on quality and safety reform opportunities, driving alignment across national, statewide and health service partners. - Promote guidance to the sector, consumers and carers through sharing and promoting evidence-based information and clinical best practice.
Clinicians Health Channel	Continue to maintain the refreshed Clinicians Health Channel through a new vendor, EBSCO. The channel was available from 1 July 2026. It provides new resources that give clinicians timely, evidence-based information at the point of care.	Promote guidance to the sector, consumers and carers through sharing and promoting evidence-based information and clinical best practice.
National Health and Medical Research reforms	Contribute to reforms that support nationally consistent healthcare research environments, by: - acting as state representative for the Commonwealth-led Inter-Governmental Policy Reform Group - supporting clinical research across Victoria under the Federal Funding Agreement, Encouraging More Clinical Trials in Australia.	Lead transformational, system-wide initiatives to optimise outcomes that are consistent, reliable and equitable for all Victorians.



Insights

We work with our partners by harnessing insights to reduce avoidable harm across the Victorian healthcare system.

This includes working across the sector to source clinical intelligence and provide local, regional and statewide monitoring of trends and risks. We use health service data, research, lived experience perspectives and insights from frontline workers to identify and share quality and safety opportunities.

When partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, we will honour their requirements for data sovereignty.

We translate insights into recommendations and work in collaboration to deliver service and system-wide improvements that benefit all Victorians.

The *strategic plan 2026–29* sets out our objectives to:

- monitor system quality and safety performance using a range of data types to identify, respond to and intervene in service and system risks and trends
- harness lived experience, frontline and systemwide insights through strong partnerships with stakeholders to strengthen healthcare for those who use and work in it
- translate insights into system-wide learning and improvement, enabling findings and recommendations to be shared across Victoria
- support the conduct of research, collaborate with registries and provide high-quality decision support tools accessed by clinicians at the point of care.

At the end of our 3-year strategic plan, we'll know our impact by:

- improvements in patient experience
- improved capability in health services to enable quality and safety
- delivery of resources and tools informed by user and sector feedback to support national reforms in clinical research
- engagement with key stakeholders, including people with lived experience, to harness insights.





Key initiatives

Our focus	During 2026–27, we will:	Aligned objectives
Sharing learning from patient harm	Publish the <i>Sentinel Event Annual Report 2025–26</i> and translate insights from sentinel events and other quality and safety intelligence sources into system-wide learning, improvement priorities, and interventions to reduce harm and improve care.	Translate insights into system-wide learning and improvement, enabling findings and recommendations to be shared across Victoria.
SCV performance monitoring process	Strengthen SCV's performance monitoring systems and processes, including through the establishment of a SCV data workplan to ensure effective data and intelligence use to identify, monitor and respond to statewide health system quality and safety challenges.	- Monitor system quality and safety performance using a range of data types to identify, respond to and intervene in service and system risks and trends. - Translate insights into system-wide learning and improvement, enabling findings and recommendations to be shared across Victoria.
VPCC Working Group supporting gynaecological practices	Identify system-level patterns of care and variation in clinical practice through a review of billing practices relating to pelvic pain, laparoscopy and endometrial surgery across Victorian public and private hospitals.	Translate insights into system-wide learning and improvement, enabling findings and recommendations to be shared across Victoria.
Consultative councils	Work with the VPCC and the CCOPMM on legislative reform and alignment of their approaches and practices with SCV's ways of working.	Translate insights into system-wide learning and improvement, enabling findings and recommendations to be shared across Victoria.



Improvement

We work with our partners to drive continuous improvement in the quality and safety of healthcare by enabling effective accountability, acting on insights and focusing on what matters most.

Together, we aim to strengthen safety culture and build a learning health system that evolves, reduces avoidable harm and supports sustainability. Guided by strong governance, shared accountability and statewide engagement, we turn learning into proactive safety management, targeted improvement initiatives and better outcomes for consumers, carers and their families.

The *strategic plan 2026–29* sets out our objectives to:

- respond to emerging quality, safety and improvement opportunities, and foster a continuous learning health system
- enable a strong safety culture in health services through embedding robust clinical governance that prioritises quality and safety improvement
- take a whole-of-system approach to improvement, translating research and insights into planning, processes and practice that enables change in health services
- drive operational excellence by aligning efforts across SCV to improve performance and deliver strategic priorities.

At the end of our 3-year strategic plan, we'll know our impact by:

- high levels of health service participation in, and outcomes of our improvement initiatives
- demonstrable reductions in avoidable harm in priority areas
- high sector uptake and engagement with SCV work.





Key initiatives

Our focus	During 2026–27, we will:	Aligned objectives
Safer Together learning health system	Accelerate statewide adoption of evidence-based safety and quality improvements and reform through the Safer Together learning health system to deliver: • reductions in avoidable harm • reductions in avoidable admissions • equitable, safe and quality use of medicines • increased value-based care delivery across Victoria.	• Lead transformational system-wide initiatives to optimise outcomes that are consistent, reliable and equitable for all Victorians. • Take a whole-of-system approach to improvement, translating research and insights into planning, processes and practice that enables change in health services. • Harness lived experience, frontline and system-wide insights through strong partnerships with stakeholders to strengthen healthcare for those who use and work in it.
Mental Health Improvement Program	Advance priority mental health reform through Safer Together by applying a learning health system approach to improve safety, quality and experience of care through: • addressing sexual safety in inpatient units • adopting the Zero Suicide Framework • reducing compulsory treatment • eliminating restrictive practices.	• Lead transformational, system-wide initiatives to optimise outcomes that are consistent, reliable and equitable for all Victorians. • Take a whole-of-system approach to improvement, translating research and insights into planning, processes and practice that enables change in health services. • Harness lived experience, frontline and system-wide insights through strong partnerships with stakeholders to strengthen healthcare for those who use and work in it.
Strengthening quality and safety capability	Advance quality and safety capability across the system by delivering targeted capability-building and knowledge-sharing initiatives to: • strengthen clinical governance • embed consumer partnerships • drive quality improvement • respond to patient harm. This advances the Quality and Safety Capability Framework.	• Enable a strong safety culture in health services through embedding robust clinical governance that prioritises quality and safety. • Take a whole-of-system approach to improvement, translating research and insights into planning, processes and practice that enables change in health services.
Strengthening the health system's response when patient harm occurs	Review SCV patient safety guidelines, policies and tools to include: • consideration for person-centred, culturally safe, trauma-informed care • a new policy position of a dedicated family support point of contact within Health Services, in response to paediatric Sentinel Events • improve maternity, neonatal and paediatric mortality reporting.	• Respond to emerging quality, safety and improvement opportunities, and foster a continuous learning health system. • Take a whole-of-system approach to improvement, translating research and insights into planning, processes and practice that enables change in health services.



Key initiatives (continued)

Our focus	During 2026–27, we will:	Aligned objectives
Supporting health services to respond to patient safety concerns	Assess SCV health service review systems and processes to: - ensure robust, holistic and independent reviews are undertaken effectively - achieve strong recommendations and improvements for health services over time.	- Respond to emerging quality, safety and improvement opportunities, and foster a continuous learning health system. - Enable a strong safety culture in health services through embedding robust clinical governance that prioritises quality and safety improvement. - Take a whole-of-system approach to improvement, translating research and insights into planning, processes and practice that enables change in health services.
Health Complaints Commissioner	Commence implementation of the Health Complaints Commissioner transition into SCV, including staff movement and legislative reform.	Drive operational excellence by aligning efforts across SCV to improve performance and deliver strategic priorities.
Health research capability building	Enhance the capacity of SCV and the department to: - conduct and embed research - support a culture where research is integral to healthcare delivery and improvement.	Take a whole-of-system approach to improvement, translating research and insights into planning, processes and practice.
Australian Teletrial Program	Expand clinical trial activity and equitable access across regional, rural and remote Victoria by: - supporting ATP National Office's program governance - assisting 7 regional health services to conduct teletrials - coordinating a clinical trial concierge service that connects sponsor organisations with health services.	Respond to emerging quality, safety and improvement opportunities, and foster a continuous learning health system.

