

department-wide programs

Description

There are a number of programs that provide the operational framework for the Department, and support the activities that are part of the five output groups described earlier in this report. In most cases, these programs also have a coordination and monitoring role for the Justice Portfolio overall across a range of functional responsibilities.

Alignment with Government's priorities

This group of programs is responsible for establishing the administrative, financial, budgetary, physical and technology environment in which the Government's priorities outlined in the five output groups can be pursued. In addition, there are some specific responsibilities that fall into this group that are directly involved in achieving policy or program priorities. The latter include the Aboriginal Justice Agreement, and creating the facilities for the community to deal with the Department online.

Physical infrastructure

New facilities completed

Ballarat and Sunshine Police Stations and Law Courts

The Sunshine and Ballarat complexes provide modern integrated buildings for police, courts, sheriff's and correctional services. The Sunshine complex was opened on 23 August 1999 and the Ballarat complex on 2 June 2000. With a combined budget of over \$50 million, both buildings have spacious public areas, state-of-the-art technology, high-quality staff facilities, excellent security, and access for people with disabilities.

New Children's Court

A new nine-courtroom facility with separate criminal and family divisions and a Children's Court clinic was completed in Little Lonsdale Street. The building replaced an inadequate rented warehouse fitted out as a court complex.

Bendigo Court

The fitout of a new County Court with full jury facilities and lift was completed in the heritage post office next door to the court. At the same time, a new lift and ramp were built in the existing court to allow disability access to the court building.



The Sunshine Police Station and Law Courts



Inside the new Victorian Children's Court



The Ballarat Police Station and Law Courts



Inside the Bendigo Court



An artist's impression of the Victorian County Court. It is expected to be completed mid-2002.

Systems and technology infrastructure

Criminal Justice Enhancement Program (CJEP) (formerly Pathfinder)

The CJEP aims to enhance access, quality and efficiency across the criminal justice system in Victoria through the introduction of improved processes and technology. It is an activity that crosses a number of output groups and portfolio responsibilities, and is based on creating effective working partnerships between the agencies concerned.

During the year under review, phase 2 of the program was completed. This involved comprehensive process redesigns for each project area:

- Accused management.
- Electronic brief/disclosure.
- Caseflow improvement
- Case and list management.
- Justice knowledge management exchange.

A public tender process was also completed. This involved selecting a systems development and integration contractor and the contract was awarded to a consortium led by Pricewaterhouse Coopers and supported by TRW Systems and SCT Corporation. The winning tender was based on the proposed installation of two proven software products, E*Justice and Banner Courts, being implemented in the Department of Justice to meet the business requirements defined by each project area.

Work planned for the 2000–01 year includes a systems study to identify the required modifications to the software programs, their integration with existing systems, and the need for any upgrades to the Department's technology infrastructure. The project is based on replacing or integrating with major IT systems in the portfolio including systems in Victoria Police, Corrections, Magistrates' Court, County Court, Office of Public Prosecutions and Victoria Legal Aid.

In addition to the process and technology aspects of the program, training, communication, work procedures and legislation changes will be undertaken that are necessary for the program to be successfully implemented.

Government online strategy

The Government's 'Connecting Victoria' policy covers information and communications technologies. Under this policy, it is expected that electronic technologies will be used to provide new and enhanced services to Victorians. The Department is implementing this policy across a number of projects and activities that provide online facilities and services for the public, and facilities used by Department staff. Projects that primarily took place during the year in review included the redevelopment of the Department's website, the development of the legal channel, and the implementation of the Department's intranet site.

The website – <http://www.justice.vic.gov.au>

The site needed to be redeveloped to improve its technical capacity to provide the services online that the public requires. This redevelopment will mean a number of services and transactions will be able to be conducted online early in 2000–01.

The redeveloped site continues to be an important source of information for the public. To date, over 160 fact sheets and 128 publications are available through the site. The site also has online information about the Department, its services and contact details.

Legalonline - the Legal Channel

The Department of Justice is the sponsoring agency for the Legal Channel and has coordinated involvement across the portfolio through a project working group and steering committee. This new website acts as a central online access point for legal information. It offers information from a range of sources such as Victoria Legal Aid, community legal centres, and from service areas of the Department. The site also has links to other relevant websites.

The purpose of the site is to give the user a one-stop-shop for information about the law and citizen's rights and responsibilities. The site endeavours to provide information to assist in resolving problems, not just explanations of the relevant law.

The Legal Channel was developed during the year in review and will be available early in 2000–01.

Department of Justice intranet

JustInfo is the Department's internal site. It brings the latest information, forms, policies and procedures electronically to the desktop of every employee. This ensures rural and regional staff are as up to date as their city counterparts, and reduces the need to print and distribute hard copies. JustInfo is also used to celebrate departmental successes and promote corporate activities.

New facilities under way

County Court Project

The Department established the Victorian County Court Project to enable private sector participation in the design, development, ownership and management of a new County Court facility in the central Melbourne legal precinct. The project is being implemented in accordance with the Government's 'Partnerships Victoria' policy.

Cabinet approved project implementation in December 1999 and appointed The Liberty Group Consortium Pty Ltd (TLG). Contract negotiations with TLG commenced in January 2000 and the contract was subsequently signed on 8 June 2000. Construction commenced immediately thereafter.

Wodonga and Warrnambool

During the year in review, a new police and courts complex at Wodonga was taken from the concept stage through design development to contract documentation and a tender was let. A site for the Warrnambool courts complex was purchased. It will be located next to the recently completed police station.

Management of existing assets

Asset revaluation

During 1999–00, on behalf of the Department, the Valuer-General conducted a revaluation of the Department's land and buildings as the first stage of a three-year rolling asset revaluation program. All land and buildings were valued as at 30 June 2000 on the basis of market value and there was a resulting net increase of \$34.7 million.

Energy management

In 1997, in view of the significant financial and environmental benefits that can be generated by energy management, the Department began implementing numerous measures to reduce consumption and minimise energy costs. As a result of the energy management program's success, the Department won the 1998 and 1999 Energy Smart Award for Best Government Organisation and the 2000 Award for Outstanding Achievement. Energy management is now undertaken in all of the Department's major sites.



The cumulative savings from the Department's Energy Management Program since 1996–97 are \$1.78 million. Energy consumption at the Department's major sites (22 court houses and prisons) from the 1996–97 base year is now 14 per cent lower. This indicates that the Department is well on the way to reaching the 15 per cent reduction target set by the Government as part of the Greener Cities initiative.

Facilities management

The Department was nominated as a national finalist in the Facility Management Association of Australia awards for its contract with Haden FM (dealing with minor works, repairs and periodic maintenance contracts). The relationship with Haden FM was acknowledged as an excellent example of partnering in the area of occupational health and safety and preparation for Y2K. The Department was commended for its contribution to the industry.

Government Infrastructure Management System

During the year in review, the Department of Justice, in conjunction with the Department of Treasury and Finance, commenced work to establish an information technology system that facilitates infrastructure management through:

- Data capture, storage, integration and interrogation.
- Project management.
- Maintenance management.
- Property management.

An amount of \$2.2 million has been approved for the development and implementation of the Government Infrastructure Management System. It is intended that the Department will pilot the system, and that there will be spin-offs to the broader public sector.

Process improvements and compliance

Portfolio planning and research

A range of portfolio planning activities was improved in 1999–00. These improvements were undertaken to achieve better budget outcomes and establish a strategic plan for the portfolio for the next five years. The development of the strategic planning capability for the portfolio included:

- Agreeing on an approach to strategic and business planning.
- Conducting an environmental scan and analysis.
- Developing the draft 'Strategic Directions' document for the Justice Portfolio aligned with the Government's key policy and planning directions.
- Strengthening portfolio-wide statistical and business analyses, and moving toward developing a planning infrastructure, including the Illicit Drugs Database.
- Aligning a portfolio research plan to the Government's strategic directions.

Business excellence

The Department has a strong commitment to the continuous improvement of its business processes and service delivery. To achieve this, the Department utilises the Australian Business Excellence Framework to oversee major change projects. During 1999–00, organisational self-assessments in 28 business units across the Department were undertaken that identified and developed a range of improvement opportunities.

During 1999–00, the Department of Justice initiated a whole-of-government approach to improvement. The Department now services the Victorian Public Sector Continuous Improvement Network that provides a forum for senior executives from various public sector departments. Its role is to promote the further adoption of management principles and practices that are consistent with continuous improvement across the Victorian Public Service.

Taxation reform

In August 1999, the Department commenced its taxation reform project to meet its obligations under the Commonwealth Government's National Taxation Reform Legislation. These obligations included collecting, and accounting for, all the goods and services tax (GST), pay as you go (PAYG) and fringe benefits tax (FBT) on goods and services provided to, and by, the Department, and extracting appropriate embedded tax savings from the costs of goods and services.

The project was significant in its scope and included a detailed analysis of all transactions for the supply of goods and services, and the updating of policies and procedures associated with these transactions. Systems were modified to support the proper collection and payment of GST, PAYG and FBT. Over 1700 hours of training were provided to more than 500 staff across the Department.

The project was successfully implemented on 1 July 2000.

In addition, the Justice Portfolio Taxation Reform Coordinating Committee provided guidance to agencies across the portfolio in their successful preparations for the new taxation system.

Risk management

Risk management is now a key management activity and during 1999–00 the Department prepared the Risk Management Policy and Framework and a Guide to Completing a Risk Register. Following the development of these documents, a series of risk-profiling workshops were held; in all, 20 workshops were conducted. The workshops assisted managers of business units to assess the risks inherent in their business, and to develop remedial plans where necessary.

As a result of the risk-profiling process, the Department's Victorian Managed Insurance Authority Risk Performance Measurement rating was increased from a level 5 performance rating to a level 8 (out of a possible 10). The Victorian Managed Insurance Authority description for a rating of 8 is that 'significant attention is given to risk management and little or no improvement is required'.

New integrated payroll

Significant planning and testing were undertaken for the installation of a new integrated HR/payroll system for the Department. The new CHRIS system is scheduled to commence with the first pay period in July 2000. The new system will enable electronic distribution of payslips via email, enhance reporting facilities, and be more cost-effective in payroll processing and production.

Government Technology Productivity Awards

The Department received a Government Technology Productivity Gold Award for its efforts to develop and implement the new Business Affairs (Names) and the Registration and Licensing systems in Consumer and Business Affairs. This award recognised the use of technology to improve productivity and service delivery. This award was one of 134 gold awards awarded nationally and only one of two gold awards issued to Victorian candidates.



Y2K compliance

The year 2000 contingency plan for the information technology infrastructure, systems and telephone facilities was successfully tested in readiness for the rollover to the year 2000 date. The transition to the year 2000 and the 29 February (leap year) were successfully managed and there were no service interruptions to the Department and its clients.

Telecommunications contracts

During 1999–2000, new telecommunications (telephone) contracts were negotiated for the Department within the whole-of-Victorian Government Head Agreement for such services. The renegotiated arrangements have resulted in significant savings to the Department's annual telephone and mobile phone charges (about a 50 per cent reduction).

People management

Launch of the People Partnership Strategy

The Department's People Management Strategy was revised during 1999–00 by a working party of departmental staff. The outcome was a new People Partnership Strategy that set out the vision for people management practices. The five key principles that underpin the strategy are:

- People management is an integrated part of the business planning process.
- Staff at all levels should be involved in framing and planning corporate goals, and be able to contribute to discussion of key issues.
- Staff at all levels should have access to developmental opportunities to help achieve the Department's outcomes, and to enhance individual career aspirations.
- Staff feel their contributions to their business unit are appropriately recognised and rewarded.
- The working environment is such that all staff feel it is a safe, supportive challenging and involving place in which to work.

Leadership and management development strategy

A leadership and management development strategy was prepared as a result of the Department's workforce analysis. The strategy's purpose is to ensure the Department has a pool of potential leaders for the future.

The strategy provides a program to identify staff who have the potential to move into future leadership positions. The program is designed so all staff who participated in the various levels of the program will receive feedback. This will enable them to identify and plan for career and management opportunities. The program is continuing into 2000–01.

Recruitment and selection improvements

A comprehensive review of departmental recruitment and selection policies and practices was completed during the year. Recommendations were developed to align departmental policy and practice with best practice in human resource management. Among other things, the recommendations recognised the information needs of those recruiting as well as those being recruited.

Significant progress was made in 1999–00 in implementing the review's recommendations with the development of a resource kit for selection panel members. Tenders have also been called to conduct selection skills training for managers and staff involved in the selection process.

Employee survey

A Department-wide employee survey was conducted to provide feedback on organisational performance to the Department's Executive Management group. The survey will be part of a regular approach to canvassing the views of staff on how well the Department is being managed. A response rate of 42 per cent (or over 1260 employees) was obtained to the survey.

The Department's Executive Management group will receive quarterly reports from business unit managers to ensure key findings of the survey are implemented.