

# Annual Report 2003–2004



DEPARTMENT  
OF JUSTICE



Hon. Rob Hulls, MP  
Attorney-General  
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Minister for Police and  
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55 St Andrews Place  
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John Lenders, MP  
Minister for Consumer  
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1 Macarthur Street  
Melbourne Victoria 3002

Hon. John Pandazopoulos, MP  
Minister for Gaming,  
Minister for Racing  
55 Collins Street  
Melbourne Victoria 3000

Dear Ministers

Annual Report 2003–2004

As required by the *Financial Management Act 1994*, I have pleasure in submitting the Department of Justice Annual Report for the year ended 30 June 2004, for you to present to the Houses of Parliament.

Yours sincerely



Penny Armytage  
Secretary

# About Justice

## Our Goals:

- **Victorian communities are safe and people feel confident about their safety.**
- **Legal rights are protected through a just, responsive and accessible legal system in which the Victorian community has confidence.**
- **Offenders in Victoria are treated in a just and humane manner and encouraged to adopt law-abiding lifestyles.**
- **Victorians value diversity and have equality of opportunity.**
- **Victorian consumers are confident and protected.**
- **Victorians benefit from responsible regulation and management of the racing and gaming industries.**

The Department of Justice is one of ten departments within the Victorian Public Sector.

The Department delivers direct services to the community and provides policy development and advice across six ministerial portfolios.

With a budget of \$974.9 million and a staff of around 4,900, the Department has more than 50 business units and service agencies across Victoria.

The common purpose of the Department is to assist the Government achieve its vision of a safe and just Victoria.

The Department does this by contributing to the administration of civil and criminal justice and public safety, responsible management and regulation of gaming and racing and providing an effective framework for consumer affairs.

The work of the Department is aligned to three of the goals identified in *Growing Victoria Together*, the Government's broad vision for the future including:

- create safe streets, homes and workplaces;
- build cohesive communities and reduce inequalities; and
- promote rights and respect diversity.

## The Justice Portfolio

The Justice Portfolio includes the Department, major agencies such as Victoria Police, the Victorian Electoral Commission, the Victorian Casino and Racing Authority as well as a range of other statutory agencies and offices. It also includes judicial and quasi-judicial bodies concerned with protecting and enforcing legal rights and responsibilities and providing social regulation and development of industries.

This Annual Report provides an account of the work undertaken by the Department during 2003–2004.

Statutory agencies and judicial and quasi-judicial bodies provide annual reports on their activities either directly to Ministers or to the Parliament.

A full list of agencies and bodies in the Justice Portfolio can be found on page 126.

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# The year in review



Penny Armytage  
Secretary

Over the past year the Department of Justice has achieved a number of significant milestones and has delivered on its core objectives. It has made significant progress in priority areas by pursuing a strong vision for the future, engaging key partners across Government and serving the Victorian community.

The Justice portfolio provides the infrastructure to achieve the Government's vision of a Safe and Just Victoria. Working with its Statutory partners and volunteers the Department delivers an extensive and varied range of services across its portfolio areas of law, policing, corrections, emergency services, the courts, consumer protection and through the regulation of gaming.

In a portfolio as complex and diverse as Justice, relationships are vital to achieving targets and progressing priorities. 2003–2004 has seen a growing emphasis on the importance of building integrated, strategic partnerships to support the Victorian Government's objective to develop more joined-up approaches with the community. The Statutory Partnerships Project, which seeks to enhance the joint work of statutory entities and the Department in the efficient delivery of the Government's policy agenda and provide quality services provision to the public, commenced in 2003–2004.

Improving crime and violence prevention outcomes for Victorians and enhancing emergency services management continue to play a key role in the drive to keep Victorian communities safe and secure. However, the importance of responding to major crimes has been underscored by events of the past year. Never before has it been so critical to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to address the impact of major crime on our community.

The passage of the *Surveillance Devices (Amendment) Act 2004* and the *Crimes (Controlled Operations) Act 2004* is a key plank in the Government's response to major crime.

Both pieces of legislation signalled the importance of law enforcement agencies having the backing of relevant and effective legislation. Further, Government has recently announced substantial additional resources, over \$40 million over four years, to fight major crime in Victoria; including upgrades in corrections and court security and technology, more judges and magistrates and an expanded capacity for the Office of Public Prosecutions to manage an increased workload.

Of particular significance for the portfolio in 2003–2004 was the release of the Attorney-General's Justice Statement. The Statement provides a blue print for modernising the justice and legal system and articulates the long term strategic change agenda for the Attorney-General's portfolio – it provides a platform for ongoing reform over the next five to ten years. It details how the Victorian legal system will remain flexible and responsive to change, while safeguarding the rights of Victoria's most vulnerable citizens.

The needs of victims of crime have been assisted with the implementation of initiatives which overcome the fragmentation of service provision. In May the Department's Victims Support Agency (VSA) was launched and, in the same month, tenders were called, in partnership with the Department of Human Services, for an integrated victim's service system. The new system recognises that victims of crime often have multiple needs and that they require a holistic, whole of government response.

The core work of the Department has continued, but with an ongoing emphasis on review and reform. Structural reform saw not only the establishment of the Road Safety Enforcement Technology Unit to oversight an integrated approach to the management of speed cameras, but also the establishment of the Victorian Commissioner for Gambling Regulation to improve the responsiveness and transparency of gambling regulation in Victoria. The consumer affairs portfolio has embarked on an ambitious program of four major legislative reviews.

This has been a significant year for the enhancement of our strategic partnerships as well as reforms to address the new and demanding challenges that face the community. Underpinning all these achievements has been the hard work of the Department's staff, volunteers and portfolio partners whom I would like to take this opportunity to thank. In a complex and demanding environment, the staff and volunteers play a vital role and the Department's successes in 2003–2004 have been built on their contributions and dedication.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Penny Armytage'.

Penny Armytage  
Secretary

# The Justice Ministers

The Department services four Ministers responsible for six ministerial portfolios. The Parliamentary Secretary to Justice supports all Justice Ministers.



The Hon. Rob Hulls, MP  
Attorney-General



The Hon. André Haermeyer, MP  
Minister for Police and Emergency Services,  
Minister for Corrections



John Lenders, MP  
Minister for Consumer Affairs

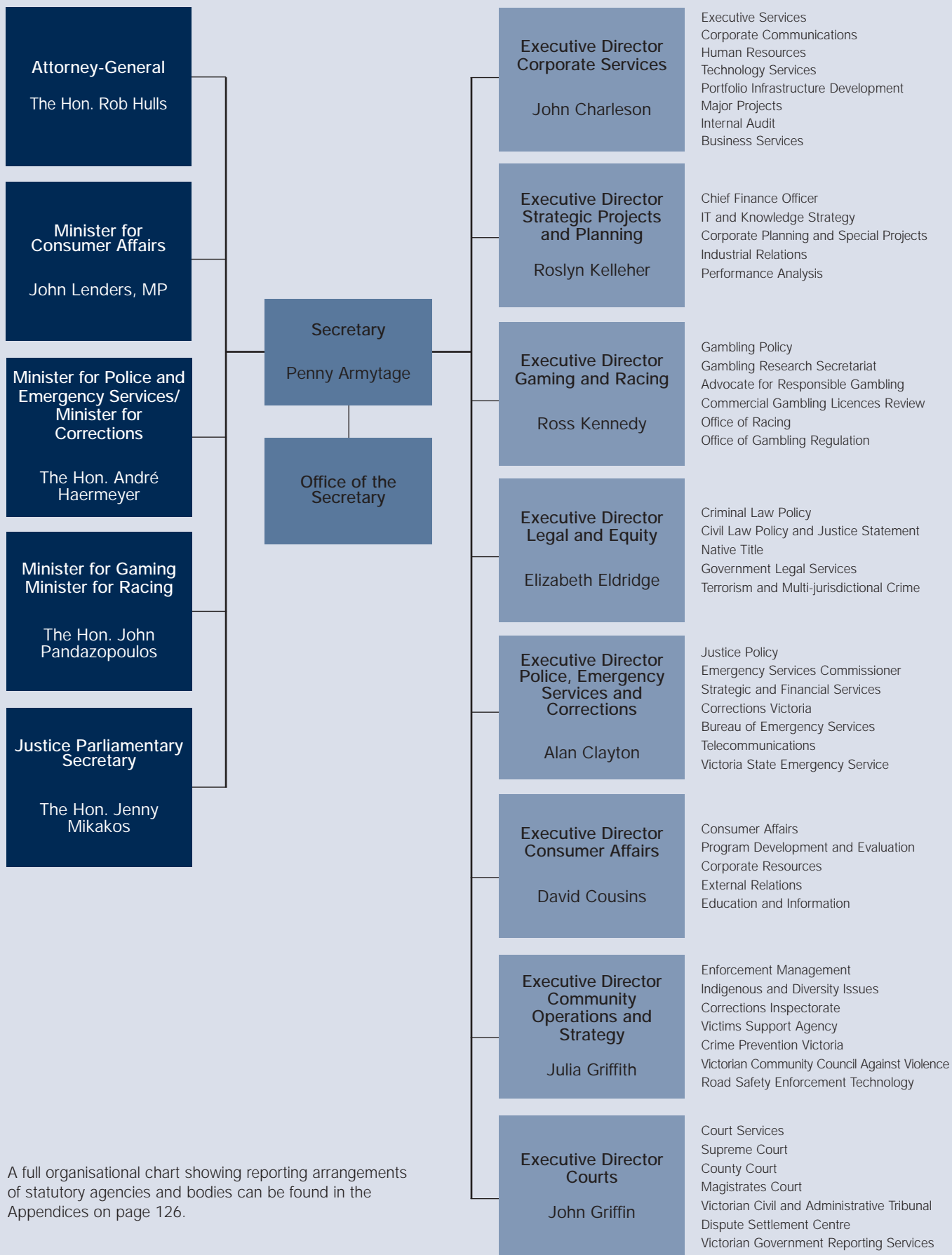


The Hon. John Pandazopoulos, MP  
Minister for Gaming, Minister for Racing



Ms. Jenny Mikakos, MP  
Parliamentary Secretary, Justice

# Organisational chart



A full organisational chart showing reporting arrangements of statutory agencies and bodies can be found in the Appendices on page 126.

# The Justice Executive



*Justice Executive Committee members: (left to right) Mr Ross Kennedy, Executive Director, Gaming and Racing; Mr John Charleson, Executive Director, Corporate Services; Ms Penny Armytage, Secretary; Dr Roslyn Kelleher, Executive Director, Strategic Projects and Planning; Ms Elizabeth Eldridge, Executive Director, Legal and Equity; Ms Julia Griffith, Executive Director, Community Operations and Strategy; Mr Alan Clayton, Executive Director, Police, Emergency Service and Corrections; Mr John Griffin, Executive Director, Courts; and Dr David Cousins, Executive Director, Consumer Affairs.*

## Justice Executive Committee

### Ms Penny Armytage Secretary

The Secretary is responsible for the administration of the Department and ensuring compliance of Justice Portfolio agencies and bodies with broad Government policy.

### Mr John Charleson Executive Director, Corporate Services

The Executive Director, Corporate Services provides leadership of Corporate Service functions across the portfolio including Human Resources, Technology Services, Portfolio Infrastructure Development, Major Projects Delivery, Executive Services, Corporate Communications, Internal Audit and Business Services.

### Mr Alan Clayton Executive Director, Police, Emergency Services and Corrections

The Executive Director, Police, Emergency Services and Corrections assists and advises the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and the Minister for Corrections in his relationship with the statutory authorities and associated agencies within his portfolio. Mr Clayton directs the development and implementation of major Government policy initiatives and special projects particularly in relation to corrections development, public safety telecommunications and major corrections capital initiatives; provides assistance and support in relation to the State's emergency management arrangements; and provides a timely and efficient operations response to a specified range of emergency situations.

Statutory agencies reporting to Justice Ministers within the portfolio include the Victoria Police, Police Appeals Board, Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board, Country Fire Authority, Adult Parole Board, Victorian Emergency Management Council, Emergency Communications Victoria, Registry of Private Agents and Firearms Appeals Committee.

### Dr David Cousins Executive Director, Consumer Affairs

The Executive Director, Consumer Affairs advises the Minister for Consumer Affairs and promotes consumer protection through information, education, advice services and enforcing consumer protection laws. Dr Cousins is also responsible for Licences and registers certain classes of businesses.

Statutory agencies and bodies within the portfolio include the Director of Liquor Licensing, Business Licensing Authority, Estate Agents Council, Motor Car Traders Guarantee Fund Claims Committee, Residential Tenancies Bond Authority and Trade Measurement Victoria.

### Ms Elizabeth Eldridge Executive Director, Legal and Equity

The Executive Director, Legal and Equity provides leadership for Criminal and Civil Law Policy, the Native Title Unit and Government Legal Services. The Legal and Equity Portfolio provides high level support to the Attorney-General and the Secretary of the Department in these areas and facilitates the achievement of the Attorney-General's law reform initiatives and responsibilities as first law officer.

Statutory agencies and bodies within the portfolio include a number of boards and administrative offices such as the Office of the Equal Opportunity Commissioner, the Office of the Public Advocate, the Office of Public Prosecutions, the Legal Ombudsman, the Legal Practice Board, the Victorian Electoral Commission, Victorian Government Solicitors Office, the Appeal Costs Board, Victoria Legal Aid, the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine, the Victorian Law Reform Commission and the Privacy Commission.

### Mr John Griffin Executive Director, Courts

The Executive Director, Courts advises the Attorney-General and provides support services to the legal, court and dispute resolution systems.

The position is responsible for court and tribunal services, the Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria and the Victorian Government Reporting Service. Statutory bodies and functions within the portfolio include Judicial Remuneration Tribunal, Judicial College of Victoria, Sentencing Advisory Council, Appeal Costs Board and Municipal Electoral Tribunal.

### Ms Julia Griffith Executive Director, Community Operations and Strategy

The Executive Director, Community Operations and Strategy leads a range of whole-of-government strategies relating to Indigenous and diversity issues, crime and violence prevention, enforcement management, victims of crime, Corrections Inspectorate and road safety enforcement technology. The Executive Director is also responsible for implementing the Government's *Safer Streets and Homes* crime prevention strategy.

### Dr Roslyn Kelleher Executive Director, Strategic Projects and Planning

The Executive Director, Strategic Projects and Planning oversees high profile whole of Justice or whole-of-government projects and the integration of planning functions to achieve strategic focus across the Department.

The Executive Director provides leadership, strategic direction and oversight in areas such as knowledge management, information technology, industrial relations and performance management and measurement. Dr Kelleher also provides budget services across the Department and the wider Justice Portfolio.

### Mr Ross Kennedy Executive Director, Gaming and Racing

The Executive Director, Gaming and Racing provides policy support and advice to the Minister for Gaming and Minister for Racing and leads the Government's gaming and racing policy agenda. The position implements regulatory measures to respond to problem gambling and monitors policy advice to gaming regulatory agencies. Mr Kennedy also provides support to the Advocate for Responsible Gambling.

Statutory agencies and bodies within the portfolio include Victorian Casino and Gaming Authority, Gambling Research Panel, Director of Commercial Gambling Licences Review, Director of Casino Surveillance, Director of Gaming and Betting, Office of Gambling Regulation, Gaming Policy Unit, Office of Racing and the Racing Appeal Tribunal.

# Strategic planning framework

## Victorian Government policy outcomes and objectives

The key policy framework of the Victorian Government is *Growing Victoria Together* (GVT), which articulates the Government's broad vision for Victoria over the next ten years.

The Justice Portfolio has an important contribution to make to the GVT outcomes of *'Safe streets, homes and workplaces'* – improving the safety and confidence of people in the places they live and work – and *'Promoting rights and diversity'* – promoting respect, cooperation and the protection of all Victorians' rights through balanced law, accessible courts and informed communities.

In order to effectively achieve these outcomes, the Government has established a number of priority objectives to which the Justice Portfolio has a major contribution. These are to:

- maintain and enhance the confidence of Victorians in their personal safety and reduce their fear of crime;
- reduce the incidence of violent crime in targeted areas;
- promote measures to prevent or mitigate the impact of emergencies;
- reduce Victoria's road toll;
- improve Victorians' confidence in the legal and courts system;
- improve access to the courts, legal aid, victims support and alternative dispute resolution;

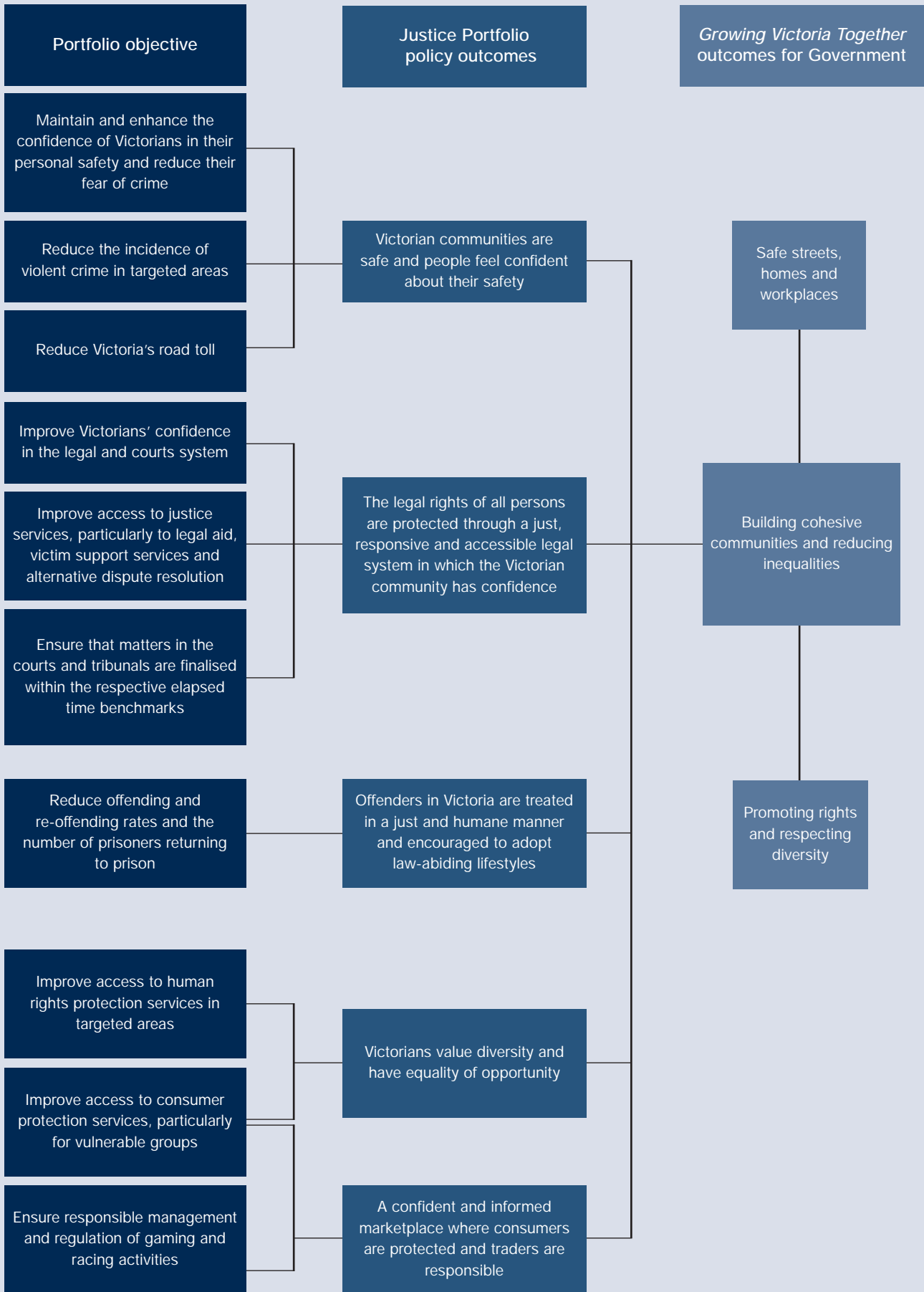
- reduce offending and re-offending rates and the number of prisoners returning to prisons;
- improve access to human rights protection services in targeted areas;
- improve access to consumer protection services, particularly for vulnerable groups; and
- ensure responsible management and regulation of gaming and racing activities.

The Justice Portfolio budget provides for a range of services delivered to the Victorian community. These services are delivered in 13 output groups, with Victoria Police being responsible for four of these output groups. All the remaining output groups for which the Justice Portfolio was responsible in 2003–2004 achieved full certification by the Minister for Finance, except for the Traffic Fines Processing Output which was partially certified as a result of lower than planned traffic infringement volumes from fixed road safety cameras.

The following diagram shows the relationship between Department of Justice objectives and outcomes and the Government's *Growing Victoria Together* framework. A more detailed break-out of these output groups and the performance measures for these groups can be found under the Report on Outputs section on page 64.

*Supporting the work of the courts forms part of the Department's contribution to the Government's vision of safe streets, homes and workplaces, and promoting rights and respecting diversity.*





# Key achievements 2003–2004

The following provides a summary of key achievements under each Departmental objective.

## **Objective One: Maintain and enhance the confidence of Victorians in their personal safety and reduce their fear of crime**

In October 2003, the Victorian Government accepted all 148 recommendations of the *Report of the Inquiry into the 2002–2003 Victorian Bushfires*, either in full or in principle. In 2003–2004, the Department worked with other state agencies to begin implementing these recommendations.

The SES Volunteer Accord was signed on 6 May 2004. The Accord recognises the contribution and value of volunteers to emergency management and ensures that the State and the Victoria State Emergency Service (VICSES) consults with SES volunteers about all significant matters affecting them in the performance of their duties.

The ABC Memorandum of Understanding was signed on 4 February 2004. The landmark agreement means ABC radio will interrupt regular programming in the event of an emergency and broadcast important information as directed by emergency service agencies.

Contracts for two major emergency services technology projects were signed during 2003–2004 to strengthen emergency communications:

- the Metropolitan Mobile Radio project will supply a multi-agency digital radio system for use throughout the greater Melbourne metropolitan area; and
- the Emergency Alerting System will enable emergency services staff and volunteers to instantly receive and send information at the incident site.

Significant work also continued on the Mobile Data Network, which was signed on 25 June 2003.

The Department undertook a comprehensive reform of Victorian legislation to improve responses to terrorism and multi-jurisdictional crime and to improve the capacity of law enforcement agencies to address serious organised criminal activity.

## **Objective Two: Reduce the incidence of violent crime in targeted areas**

The building or upgrading of 20 police stations was completed at a cost of \$71.68 million.

A total of 18,814 handguns were surrendered under the Handgun buyback scheme, designed to reduce the demand and supply of weapons in the community.

In a state-first, the Department initiated the *Family Violence Prevention through the Workplace* project to develop resources for workplace prevention of family violence.

Over \$1.02 million worth of programs to reduce offending and violence by young people continued in collaboration with the Departments of Education and Training and Human Services.

The *Exploring and Responding to Youth Gang Formations* forum on 10 June 2004 examined emerging issues surrounding young people's participation in gang-like activity in Victoria.

## **Objective Three: Reduce Victoria's road toll**

Road safety initiatives focused on speeding have been highly successful – the average speed in a 60km/h zone has fallen from 63km/h in November 2000 to 59.7km/h in November 2003. Initiatives undertaken by the Department of Justice in partnership with the Victoria Police, VicRoads and the Transport Accident Commission contributed to the lowest road toll on record in 2003.

Additional Sheriff's Officers employed at the end of the 2002–2003 financial year assisted in increasing the number of warrants actioned from around 408,000 in 2002–2003 to 490,000 in 2003–2004.

## **Objective Four: Improve Victorians confidence in the legal and courts system**

The Attorney-General's Justice Statement is a product of close collaboration between the Department of Justice and the Victorian courts and the legal sector. The Statement details the key strategic directions for the Attorney-General's portfolio and maps out initiatives to modernise the justice system.

The Sentencing Advisory Council was established. The 12 directors represent a range of perspectives that will ensure robust debate on sentencing issues.

Work was completed on the \$640,000 upgrade of the Horsham Court in August 2003 and the \$1.4 million upgrade of the historic Bendigo Court in July 2003.

Construction of the \$15.5 million Warrnambool Court complex and the \$16.7 million Mildura Court complex continued throughout 2003–2004.

## **Objective Five: Improve access to justice services, particularly to legal aid, victim support services and alternative dispute resolution**

The *Multicultural Justice Directory* was launched in November 2003 and provides information about Department of Justice services and the broad range of services provided by the community sector. Available in hardcopy and online in a range of languages, this is the first time this information has been available in such a comprehensive and accessible format.

The Victims Support Agency was launched in May 2004, providing a whole-of-government response to victims of crime and representing the voice of victims within the Justice system.

A total of 25 new rural and regional Alternative Dispute Resolution mediators were recruited and trained, bringing the total number of mediators operating across Victoria to over 160, with 60 of these from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

## **Objective Six: Ensure that matters in the courts and tribunals are finalised within the respective elapsed time benchmarks**

In 2003–2004, all Victoria's court jurisdictions performed strongly with most exceeding their caseload targets.

Work continued on the five-year Criminal Justice Enhancement Program. Another key initiative undertaken in 2003–2004 included the implementation of e-filing, enabling court documents to be lodged electronically 24 hours a day.

### **Objective Seven: Reduce offending and re-offending rates and the number of prisoners returning to prison**

Victoria's first Home Detention Program commenced in January 2004. The three-year pilot program provides a sentencing option for the courts to help keep non-violent offenders out of prison, as well as a pre-release option for paroled offenders.

Construction of the \$20 million regional minimum security prison near Beechworth continued. The Langi Kal Kal Prison redevelopment was officially opened in March 2004, upgrading accommodation and other prison related facilities.

A total of 5,454 offenders entered into diversion plans such as community service. These plans, which are part of the Criminal Justice Diversion Program managed by the Magistrates' Courts, provide mainly first-time offenders with the opportunity to avoid a criminal record.

### **Objective Eight: Improve access to human rights protection services in targeted areas**

In an Australian first, the historic Yorta Yorta Agreement was signed on 10 June 2004 – the first time in Victoria an agreement has been reached outside of the native title process.

Six Indigenous Community Corrections Officers were recruited to provide more culturally appropriate supervision and management of Koori offenders.

A total of 6,869 matters were revoked under the Enforcement Review Program, which assists people who suffer physical or intellectual disabilities or a diagnosed mental illness by withdrawing infringement notices or referring them to a magistrate if considered appropriate.

### **Objective Nine: Improve access to consumer protection services particularly for vulnerable groups**

On 1 February 2004, major parts of the *Estate Agents and Sale of Land Act (Amendment) Act 2003* came into effect, making under and over quoting of property prices illegal and introducing severe penalties for dummy bidding at auctions.

The Government amended the *Fair Trading Act 1999*. The amendments ensure that business contracts in Victoria do not contain unfair terms that cause a significant imbalance to the detriment of the consumer in the rights and obligations arising under the contract.

The Department took part in a global sweep of online get rich quick schemes. The sweep investigated 3,000 Australian sites, resulting in more than 30 websites being taken down or amended for misleading and deceptive content.

In a world first, the Department established the online Business Names Test where businesses, in 65 per cent of cases, receive instant online approval of their business name.

### **Objective Ten: Ensure responsible management and regulation of gaming and racing activities**

The *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* was passed in December 2003. The Act consolidates eight existing Acts into one streamlined Act to regulate gambling in Victoria. It also establishes a new statutory framework.

The Advocate for Responsible Gambling was appointed in August 2003. The Advocate chairs the Problem Gambling Roundtable, which provides an open forum for discussion among all stakeholders on approaches to problem gambling.

*Champions*, the Australia Racing Museum and Hall of Fame, was opened on 1 July 2004. The \$7.4 million museum highlights the cultural and historical impact of racing in Australia.

# Achievements with our volunteers 2003–2004

## Volunteers

The contribution of volunteers to our community is invaluable. They work in partnership with the Department and across the wider portfolio to create safer streets, homes and workplaces and build cohesive communities.

The Justice Portfolio is diverse and so are its volunteers. We are privileged to have in excess of 95,000 volunteers. While a large number of the volunteers come from the emergency services portfolio, volunteers contribute to many areas including:

- Victoria State Emergency Service;
- Life Saving Victoria (LSV);
- Office of the Public Advocate;
- Community Legal Centres;
- Police Neighbourhood Watch;
- Country Fire Authority (CFA – both operational firefighters and operational support);
- Court Network;
- Victims Assistance Program;
- Court Services (the Justices of the Peace and Bail Justices);
- Australian Volunteer Coast Guard;
- Crime Stoppers Committee;
- Official Prison Visitors and Aboriginal Official Visitors;
- Racing (racing clubs); and
- Victorian Community Council Against Violence.

Without the valuable contribution of every one of our volunteers many functions of the Justice Portfolio would not happen. They are an essential part of Justice. Below are some of the key projects the Department of Justice has achieved in partnership with its volunteers.

### SES Volunteer Accord

2003–2004 saw the development of the Victoria State Emergency Service Volunteer Accord. It is the first of its kind in Australia for a State Emergency Service and similar to the Volunteer Charter agreed between the State, CFA and its volunteers in December 2001. The Accord, which was signed on 6 May 2004, is a commitment by the Victorian Government, VICSES and its volunteers to each other. The Accord recognises the contribution and value of SES volunteers to emergency management and ensures that the State and VICSES will consult with SES volunteers about all significant matters affecting them in the performance of their duties.

### Emergency services

In 2003–2004, more than 87,000 volunteers from the CFA, VICSES, Life Saving Victoria and the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard worked to assist in firefighting, land and sea rescues, road accidents, repairing storm and flood damage and in responding to other emergencies.

In 2003–2004 the CFA responded to more than 33,000 calls for assistance:

Category	No. calls
Building fires and fires in buildings	2,843
Vegetation fires	4,515
Other fires and explosions	5,330
Road accident rescues (including fire assistance to other agencies attending road crash rescues)	2,846
Alarm notification not involving fire	2,924
Other false alarms/false calls and good intent calls	8,591
All other incidents	6,439
<b>Total</b>	<b>33,488</b>

In 2003–2004 VICSES volunteers spent more than 80,000 hours responding to a total of 9,286 incidents:

Category	No. incidents
Flood	774
Fire support	115
Rescue – land	299
Rescue – marine	44
Road crash rescue	1,253
Road crash assist	64
Search – land	237
Search – marine	87
Storm	5,697
Other	716
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,286</b>



*Over 87,000 people, including SES volunteers work together to respond to emergencies and protect the Victorian community.*

### Valuing our emergency services volunteers

The three-year, \$3 million Valuing Volunteer Emergency Services Workers project commenced in 2003–2004. It aims to develop new or enhance existing programs to recognise, recruit and support emergency services volunteers in agencies including the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard, CFA, Life Saving Victoria and VICSES.

### Volunteer Scholarship Scheme

The Protecting Victoria Volunteer Scholarship Scheme was developed under the Victorian Government's Protecting Victoria Recognition Program to acknowledge those who protect our communities. The scholarship will award grants of between \$4,000 and \$10,000 for CFA and SES volunteers. The grants will assist them to undertake studies in Australia or overseas to improve the range, quality and efficiency of emergency services for the benefit of the community.

### The Court Network

The Court Network is a statewide community-based court support service. Through the Network, more than 300 trained volunteers provide information, support and referral services to court users. The network supports around 65,000 people each year, including those accused of crimes, litigants with little or no support and women and children who have been exploited by crime.

### Night patrols

Every Friday and Saturday in Mildura and Shepparton, community volunteers on the night patrol bus transport Koori youth from public areas or local discos and pubs to a safe place – removing them from risky situations that could result in police arrests.

A good relationship has developed with police, who have an agreement to call on the night patrol when it comes to dealing with Koori young people in public spaces. Night patrol workers are also able to call for police assistance if they face problems getting a young person home.

Community members and the police believe that patrols have improved community safety and reduced the incidence of crime, fear and violence.

### Office of the Public Advocate

The Office of the Public Advocate manages three volunteer programs.

More than 500 volunteers in the Community Visitors Program independently monitor residential services provided to people with a disability to ensure they remain of a high quality.

Under the Independent Third Person Program more than 200 volunteers assist people with intellectual disabilities, acquired brain injury, dementia or mental illness during interviews with, or when making formal statements to Victoria Police.

The Community Guardians Program includes 50 volunteers who are responsible for making decisions about issues such as health care and accommodation, for people whose disability prevents them from making reasonable decisions for themselves.

### Official Prison Visitors Scheme

The Official Prison Visitor Scheme provides independent advice to the Minister for Corrections on the operation of Victoria's 13 prisons. Volunteers from the community are permitted unrestricted access to both staff and prisoners to assist them in discussing prison policies and conditions. At the end of June 2004, there were 25 Official Prison Visitors from a range of cultural backgrounds.

*Community volunteers on the Koori night patrol bus in Shepparton.*

