



a fairer victoria
achievements so far

april 2008

Foreword

Premier and
Minister for
Community
Development



I am pleased to present some of the achievements of the first two and a half years of A Fairer Victoria, our framework for creating opportunity, addressing disadvantage and building a more inclusive society.

We have invested over \$3 billion in A Fairer Victoria since 2005. These investments have expanded and improved services and have changed the way we work with community groups, with business and with other levels of Government.

We are working to ensure that everyone, no matter what their background, has the opportunity to take part in the social, economic and civic life of our state. We are setting the direction, providing funding and supporting ideas that work.

This report shows that we are seeing some important gains across a broad range of areas. While we will continue to see improvements as initiatives roll out, it is also important to focus intensively on issues and areas where we can have the biggest impact and that matter most to Victorians.

In future we will continue to focus on early childhood development, on education and getting people ready for work, on health and on the liveability of our towns and neighbourhoods.

The importance of investments in these areas, now and in the future, will be clear from this report.

John Brumby
Premier of Victoria



Fairness is important to Victorians – it is what makes ours a decent society. But it is something we have to work hard to build and preserve. This is a project in which we all have a role – governments, community groups, businesses, and individuals.

A Fairer Victoria starts from the understanding that we need to work collectively to make Victoria a fairer place – through partnerships, networks, local collaborations and alliances.

So the achievements in this report are not simply the achievements of Government. They are the achievements of a wide range of people and groups in local communities who are striving to make a difference.

A Fairer Victoria was conceived as a long term strategy but it is important to take early stock of progress and, where necessary, refine our approach. The achievements outlined in this report are very encouraging and help us see where we are making a difference and where to concentrate in the future.

In the past three years we have improved universal services, and at the same time we are seeing gains from our focus on population groups and places with high needs. We have emphasised prevention and early intervention, with important improvements in early childhood which will translate into improved long term wellbeing for these children. And we have created more opportunities for people to get involved in the decisions that affect them and to shape the services they use. This is what will, in the end, make the difference.

These remain the fundamental elements of A Fairer Victoria. In consultations with stakeholders in 2007 there was strong support for these fundamentals, but also a consistent view that we should concentrate our efforts in critical areas. This will be the platform on which we build A Fairer Victoria 2008.

Peter Batchelor MP
Minister for Community Development

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introduction

This report provides an overview of the achievements of A Fairer Victoria in its first two and a half years.

A Fairer Victoria is the State Government's framework for providing opportunity, addressing vulnerability and disadvantage, and creating a more inclusive society. Disadvantage persists in communities worldwide and presents a continuing challenge for governments, the community sector and the wider community. But there have been advances in Australia and around the world – advances in knowledge and in the way governments see their role, which have provided new ideas about how to tackle disadvantage.

Acknowledging the complexity of disadvantage and the challenges in addressing it, A Fairer Victoria takes a new approach. Disadvantage can be longstanding and intergenerational, so we are taking a long-term perspective and focussing on underlying causes as well as symptoms. Because disadvantage is concentrated in particular population groups and particular locations, we are targeting people and place. Because of the complexity of disadvantage we understand that the actions of the State Government will not be sufficient on their own – so we're working closely with other levels of government, the community sector, and the business world to find sustainable new approaches. And because the solutions often lie within communities themselves we are providing the support and resources communities need to take action, while at the same time changing the way we work to better support community needs and aspirations.

Reflecting this understanding, the objectives of A Fairer Victoria are to:

- ensure that universal services provide equal opportunity to all
- reduce barriers to opportunity
- support disadvantaged groups
- support disadvantaged places, and
- make it easier to work with government.

To date we have focussed our effort in 14 strategy areas. These form the structure for this report.

This is an early progress report after two and a half years of activity, within a long term strategy to address some of the underlying causes of disadvantage. The report confirms that improvements are taking place and that further sustained effort will be required to address entrenched disadvantage.

A focus on place

A Fairer Victoria has a dual emphasis: it focuses on particular population groups and on particular places of high need. In areas of high need we are taking a 'place-based' approach.

We understand that delivering the same services in different places can produce different results. The issues faced by a growing community in outer Melbourne are very different to the issues in a rural town facing major industry change, which in turn are very different to the needs of a neighbourhood in an established suburb dealing with intergenerational unemployment.

In some places different kinds of needs cluster together, reinforcing each other in a cycle that has proven difficult to break. We're taking an approach in these areas that:

- brings the community, government, business and community organisations together to identify issues and chart a way forward (partnerships)
- improves the skills of local people and the information available to them (capacity building)
- gives a high priority to social, economic and civic participation (social inclusion)
- coordinates the efforts of State, local and Federal governments (joined-up government), and
- builds on local strengths and interests (strengths-based approach).

Many initiatives in A Fairer Victoria use this place-based approach. Their scale and focus vary considerably, depending on the challenge at hand and the priorities determined by the local community. Some examples include:

- *Neighbourhood Renewal*, *Community Renewal* and the *Community Building Initiative*, which bring together State and local government, community groups, local businesses and residents to revitalise local communities

- *Transport Connections*, which involves us working with community organisations, residents, transport providers and local businesses to create better transport solutions through better use of existing resources in rural communities
- Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs), which bring together education providers, industry, community organisations, individual and government organisations to improve education, training and employment for young people aged 15-19 at the local community level across Victoria
- *Best Start*, a prevention and early intervention program aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of Victorian children by strengthening the capacity of parents, families, communities, and early years services through local partnership and collaboration, and
- *Workforce Participation Partnerships*, which develop sustainable employment opportunities for Victorians who face significant barriers to work. The program relies on local partnerships between industry, unions, local government, employment services, training providers, and community organisations.

These initiatives are making a difference, as detailed in this report.

This is an early progress report after two and a half years of activity, within a long term strategy to address some of the underlying causes of disadvantage. The report confirms that improvements are taking place and that further sustained effort will be required to address entrenched disadvantage.

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