

# **Safer Care Victoria Strategic plan 2017–2020**

How we will lead quality and safety improvement in healthcare,  
for the benefit of all Victorians, for the next three years

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## CEO's foreword



Safer Care Victoria 'opened its doors' as our state's new healthcare quality and safety improvement agency on 1 January 2017. We were born out of a review of Victoria's hospital quality and safety assurance – *Targeting Zero: supporting the Victorian hospital system to eliminate avoidable harm and strengthen quality of care*. The review itself was undertaken in response to a major health service governance failure. A failure that none of us ever wish to witness again.

It has been an honour to have been a practising clinician, an obstetrician, for the past three decades or more. To have been invited into people's lives and families, to have shared in their joys, hopes and expectations, and to have contributed to their health and recovery, even in the smallest of ways, has been truly wonderful. Even in darker moments, to have been allowed to share in and witness some of the most profound grief, at times of an almost unbearable weight, has been a humbling privilege. Aching, but an intense privilege.

At the centre of my professional life for these past 30 years has been an endless, and at times frenetic, series of patient encounters. Thousands upon thousands of encounters. Each so different and yet often so similar. Encounters that, sadly, at times have not been without shame or error. My shame. My error. But encounters that have shaped and informed me, as patient encounters have shaped and informed many other clinicians before me. In particular, they have informed me, very clearly, of the task ahead of us.

That task is not an easy one. But it is an essential one. It will require change, much change, perseverance and focus. It will also require transparency, shared learning and an investment in each other. Above all, at Safer Care Victoria we are

committed to elevating the consumer to be a genuine partner in her/his own healthcare. Easy to write. Much more difficult to deliver. To paraphrase Don Berwick, the days of medical heroism are (thankfully) gone. Ahead of us lies a journey of professionalising our industry in a manner never really witnessed before. We would love you to join us on that journey. We certainly can't do it without you.

In this plan, we lay out our strategy, approaches and priorities for that improvement journey. Our hopes are there too. You will read about culture and leadership. About clinician and consumer engagement. And about innovation – targeted innovation. You will also read that we are committed to measuring. Not because we believe that the measurements themselves are an outcome but because we want to know what works and what doesn't. And we want you to know too.

Our work plans are a result of a myriad of conversations, debates and arguments that we have had with you and your colleagues, with interstate and international friends, and of course with consumers. Not quite enough of the latter but we are working on it. Our plans are not quite perfect but that's okay. We are not yet a year old. We would welcome all and any feedback. Please tell us when we are doing well – we like that – but also tell us when we have missed the mark.

I look forward to working with you to deliver on the challenges handed to us by *Targeting Zero* and, more importantly, on the expectations of all Victorians. All of us at Safer Care Victoria do. Join us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Euan Wallace'.

**Professor Euan Wallace AM**  
Chief Executive Officer



Hon Jill Hennessy MP

Minister for Health  
Minister for Ambulance Services

GPO Box 4057  
Melbourne Victoria 3001  
Telephone: +61 3 9096 8561  
www.dhhs.vic.gov.au  
DX: 210081  
E4623487

Professor Euan Wallace  
Chief Executive Officer  
Safer Care Victoria  
50 Lonsdale Street  
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Professor Wallace

I am pleased to provide you with this Statement of Expectations (SoE) for Safer Care Victoria. This SoE will be reviewed every two years in accordance with recommended practice or unless otherwise amended.

This SoE sets out my expectations of Safer Care Victoria in relation to the Victorian Government's commitments to ensuring that all Victorians, irrespective of their economic circumstances, receive world-class health care.

### Objectives

Safer Care Victoria has been created in response to *Targeting Zero: Supporting the Victorian hospital system to eliminate avoidable harm and strengthen quality of care*, the final report of the Review of Hospital Safety and Quality Assurance in Victoria.

In line with the recommendations in *Targeting Zero*, Safer Care Victoria has been established to work in partnership with consumers, clinicians, health services, and the Department of Health and Human Services (the department) to drive quality improvement and the oversight of patient safety across healthcare services in Victoria.

### Statement of Functions

The functions of Safer Care Victoria are to:

1. Support all public and private health services to prioritise and improve safety and quality for patients.
2. Strengthen clinical governance, lead clinician engagement and drive quality improvement programs and processes implemented in health services.
3. Provide independent advice and support to public and private health services to respond and address serious quality and safety concerns.
4. Review public and private health services and health service performance, in conjunction with the department, in order to investigate and improve safety and quality for patients.
5. Lead Victoria's contribution to the development of national accreditation and other clinical care standards by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care.





6. Undertake research and coordinate the provision of evidence-based research and guidelines throughout the sector.
7. Coordinate the efforts of clinical networks to:
  - a. Reduce clinical variation and issue best-practice guidelines
  - b. Report annually on improvement strategies
  - c. Ensure improvement activities are coordinated.
8. Reduce avoidable harm by:
  - a. Sharing trends and learnings from significant harm incident reports
  - b. Respond to and anticipate health system issues relating to patient safety
  - c. Coordinate system responses to specific safety events
9. Provide advice to the Minister and Secretary on any issues arising out of its functions.

Further, I expect that Safer Care Victoria will share data and information with the department and with the Victorian Agency for Health Information to enable each of these organisations to carry out its functions with respect to the funding, management, planning, monitoring, improvement and evaluation of health services. This includes data and information that may be received from third parties.

I expect Safer Care Victoria to put in place appropriate arrangements so that all data and information is protected by the security and privacy provisions outlined in legislation and in government policies. I also expect Safer Care Victoria to put in place appropriate controls to manage the risk of unauthorised disclosure of information.

#### **Independence and Accountability**

Safer Care Victoria has been established under section 11 of the *Public Administration Act 2004* (the Act) as an administrative office in relation to the department by Orders in Council dated 18 October 2016 and published in the Victoria Government Gazette on 20 October 2016.

Safer Care Victoria will operate as part of the Victorian Government and, under section 14(1) of the Act, the Chief Executive Officer is responsible to the Secretary to the department for the general conduct and effective management of the functions and activities of the Administrative Office and must advise the Secretary in all matters relating to the Administrative Office.

Consistent with the recommendations in *Targeting Zero*, Safer Care Victoria will perform its functions independently of the department and with a view to best practice. However, like other government agencies, I also expect Safer Care Victoria to take account of government policies and legislation in performing its role.

Further, I expect that Safer Care Victoria will promptly inform the department, and my office, in relation to any significant, sensitive or imminent issues, including media issues, and any known risks to the effective operation of Safer Care Victoria.

#### **Annual corporate plan**

I expect Safer Care Victoria to prepare a three year strategic plan for coordinating interdisciplinary improvement work and an annual corporate plan, which it will submit to the department within thirty (30) days of the start of each financial year. The corporate plan

should be developed in consultation with the department to ensure alignment between the strategic and annual work plans of the department and its entities.

I expect you to respond to this Statement with your first corporate plan by 1 November 2017, outlining how you intend to deliver your functions in the first year including details of key activities, timelines and targets.

#### **Performance reporting**

In addition to performance reporting required by the department, I expect Safer Care Victoria to provide to me as the Minister for Health an annual report within thirty (30) days of the end of each financial year. The report should detail the Administrative Office's key achievements and any challenges faced in delivering on your functions in the preceding year.

Finally, I expect this SoE, together with your corporate plan, to be published on the Safer Care Victoria website.

I look forward to seeing Safer Care Victoria's progress and its contribution to the strengthening of Victoria's health system.

Yours sincerely



**Hon Jill Hennessy MP**  
Minister for Health  
Minister for Ambulance Services

2 10/ 2017



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# Our story

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Safer Care Victoria (SCV) was established in January 2017 in response to the discovery of a cluster of preventable stillbirths at a Victorian health service that had occurred in 2013 and 2014.

The establishment of SCV was one of the key structural reforms recommended by *Targeting Zero*<sup>1</sup>, the final report of the review that investigated what needed to be done to prevent such tragedies from occurring again in our state.

Our purpose at SCV is both simple and complex: simple, in that we exist to support health services to provide outstanding healthcare to Victorians. Always.

Complex, in that achieving this goal will require us to work closely with consumers, their families and carers, clinicians, health service executives and management, our universities and research institutes, professional colleges and other regulatory authorities. Alongside these stakeholders, we will also be working with our colleagues in the Department of Health and Human Services (the department) and other government departments and agencies – such as the Victorian Agency for Healthcare Information (VAHI) and the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care.

We know that Victoria has a world class healthcare system, with many examples of best practice and innovation. Our task is to shine the light on these many pockets of excellence and share them across the system.

We also know that avoidable harms continue to occur in our health services, as they do within all sophisticated healthcare systems<sup>2</sup>. Our role is to lead the state in driving down such harm – with the goal of zero avoidable harm. Targeting zero.

As an Administrative Office of the department we are accountable for contributing to the delivery of several of the department's strategic directions and priority actions<sup>3</sup>. However, the deliberate separation of quality and safety from other departmental functions, which was achieved with our establishment, requires us to be independent-minded and forthright in our approach to leading change and improving the quality and safety of our health system.



# Our values

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Our staff set our values. They describe how we do business.

## Challenge the norm

we do things differently, and we are proud of it  
we are curious and innovative, and have the courage to challenge what is normal  
we are honest, open and speak up when things aren't right

## Accept nothing less than excellence

we are outcome focused – we go above and beyond to ensure consumers receive high-quality care  
we move with the sector and help healthcare providers to improve  
we won't make excuses for second rate outcomes

## Tell it like it is

we go out of our way to share information with others (internally and externally)  
we communicate with plain language  
we are transparent about what we are doing and what we are trying to achieve  
we recognise what doesn't work and take action to improve

## One team

we know the best outcomes arise when we work together  
we recognise the value that each individual can bring to the team, and respect each other's opinions

## Bring your whole self

we bring integrity to our work, and the interactions we have with others  
we believe in what we do, and are passionate about making a difference

# Our strategic priorities

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Our five strategic priorities were primarily determined by the people who matter most to us: consumers and clinicians.

We also took into account the learnings from *Targeting Zero* and the findings of similar reviews<sup>4</sup> of health system failings, as well as other reports<sup>5</sup>. These reviews provide a consistent evidence base for strong patient safety cultures in healthcare. Get these components right and our system will be in a good place.

The reviews are very clear that the health services and systems that have failed: did not work with and listen to consumers and their families; did not work with and listen to clinicians; had poor workforce culture, inadequate leadership and governance; lacked outcome monitoring; and paid inadequate attention to improvement and innovation.

Our strategic priorities are:

- Partnering with consumers
- Partnering with clinicians
- Leadership
- Review and response
- System improvement and innovation.



Strategic priority	Strategic objectives	What success looks like in three years
Partnering with consumers	Consumer voices and choices are central to own care	Consumer-defined outcome measures and improvement goals being delivered at a health service level and within SCV
	Consumer voices and experiences improve health services and the health system	Demonstrable improvement in patient experience
Partnering with clinicians	Reductions in unwarranted variation in practice and outcome	Reduction in variation in specific clinical conditions – to be identified with clinicians and consumers
	Clinicians' voices and experiences improve health services and the health system	SCV chief clinicians, the Victorian Clinical Council and clinical networks are utilised to inform policy and planning
Leadership	Healthy culture driven by strong leaders	System-wide approach to developing and sustaining current and future leaders
	Quality and safety governance embedded throughout health services	Evidence that accountability of health services' governing bodies and executives is strengthened
Review and response	Robust response and review of serious incidents	A just culture: demonstrable improvements in the number of serious events reported to SCV
	Dissemination of learnings from serious incidents, and local best practice	Measurable reductions in avoidable harm
	Quality and safety data analysis drives system oversight and response	New quality and safety measures in clinician-driven reports for sector and public
System improvement and innovation	Lead improvements in priority areas	Demonstrable reductions in avoidable harm in priority areas
	Enable innovation in priority areas	Evidence of local innovation scaled across the system
	SCV is a national and international leader in quality and safety	Publications and presentations evidencing SCV impact



# Partnering with consumers

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Commitment to the involvement of consumers and community stakeholders – and ensuring they have an equal voice – in quality and safety improvement activities is critical. A key aspect of our work is supporting a person-centred approach to quality and safety improvement initiatives, including to health service incident responses and patient complaints, and to develop the capacity for people to participate fully in their care.

To achieve our first objective, **Consumer voices and choices are central to own care**, SCV will deliver:

- practical ways to improve person-centred care
- advice and support to promote the uptake of shared decision-making approaches
- opportunities to develop and promote the use of tools to improve health literacy
- support to ensure there is open disclosure between consumers and health services when things go wrong
- alternative pathways supporting patients, families and carers to escalate their concerns when they are worried
- different ways for patients, families and carers to provide feedback about their experiences in healthcare.

To achieve our second objective, **Consumer voices and experiences improve health services and the health system**, SCV will:

- implement a statewide consumer participation strategy (Partnering in healthcare framework)
- establish a SCV patient and family council
- support health services to recruit, develop and support patient leaders
- support and train consumers to participate in serious event investigations
- enhance the utility of existing patient reported experience measures and ensure they are publicly reported
- work with consumers, clinicians and VAHI to establish an agreed set of patient reported outcome measures and revised patient reported experience measures
- support health services to involve consumers in improvement and innovation activities
- promote and support the use of person-centred co-design as a method for improvement
- triangulate positive feedback and complaints to the Minister for Health, Health Complaints Commissioner, Mental Health Complaints Commissioner and the department to inform system-level responses.





# Partnering with clinicians

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Support, engagement and coordination with clinicians to enable authentic partnership and leadership on quality and safety improvement is essential for system-wide improvement.

The clinical networks and the Victorian Clinical Council play crucial roles in bringing clinician and consumer voices to the forefront of SCV's work.

We have a range of clinical networks covering specialty areas of healthcare that work collaboratively to unite practitioners across the state.

Our clinical networks will drive reductions in unwarranted variation, establish clinical practice guidelines and lead specific improvement programs and projects.

## Our chief clinicians

Our chief clinicians provide frontline experiences and knowledge within SCV as we deliver our reform agenda, ensuring we are relevant to current-day practice concerns. Our chiefs are connected to their colleagues across the nation and, via regular events and bulletins, link clinicians from across the Victorian public and private sectors.

To achieve our first objective, **Reductions in unwarranted variation in practice and outcome** SCV will:

- amplify the work of the clinical networks
- utilise our clinical networks to drive reductions in unnecessary clinical practice variation in specific areas
- actively facilitate the spread of best practice across the state
- develop and support the implementation of clinical practice guidelines.

To achieve our second objective, **Clinicians' voices and experiences improve health services and the health system**, SCV will:

- deliver and implement a clinical engagement framework
- provide relevant clinical outcome measures to clinicians
- utilise the Victorian Clinical Council and clinical networks for advice on health policy and system planning
- build alumni networks of leadership program participants and secondments to establish a workforce of quality and safety leaders
- connect clinicians – across the system and the nation – to share knowledge and provide support.

# Leadership

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Healthy cultures are driven by strong leaders. Leadership for quality and safety across all organisational levels enables more effective governance to be embedded throughout health services.

We are partnering with the sector to develop a strategy and series of programs to enhance, support and connect senior and frontline leaders within and across health services and the health system.

To achieve our first objective, **Healthy culture driven by strong leaders**, SCV will:

- co-design a suite of leadership development programs tailored to the different types of existing and emerging consumer, clinician and manager leaders in our system, and their varied career pathways
- provide tools and training to develop skills in continuous improvement quality and safety and management, across the sector
- identify and work to reduce the barriers for people to take up pivotal quality and safety leadership roles, such as Director of Medical Services
- work with rural health leaders to understand and help address their unique leadership challenges.

To achieve our second objective, **Quality and safety governance embedded throughout health services**, SCV will:

- co-design a clinical governance curriculum and range of targeted education programs to enhance skills, below board level
- introduce a standard suite of measures for health service boards to monitor the effectiveness of clinical governance
- establish a program for regular review of implementation of the clinical governance framework.

# Review and response

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We are responsible for the oversight of quality and safety in Victorian health services and, in partnership with VAHI, monitoring and reviewing data and providing advice to health services and the department.

We support the sector to respond to system issues including Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) alerts. We also engage with national committees and agencies to drive the quality and safety reform agenda. Our legislated consultative councils conduct case reviews, identify trends and themes, and provide recommendations and advice on how to prevent avoidable harm.

To achieve our first objective, **Robust response and review of serious incidents**, SCV will:

- build a team to provide immediate response, support and follow through after serious incidents
- establish an academy of expert reviewers to lead service-level clinical reviews
- establish a network of trained clinicians to offer independent advice as part of root cause analysis investigations
- develop best practice tools to support root cause analysis, in-depth case review and other contemporary investigation methods
- work with the department to establish new regional mortality and morbidity committees.

To achieve our second objective, **Dissemination of learnings from serious incidents, and local best practice**, SCV will:

- share learnings from best practice and serious incidents via our website, formal reports, bulletins and forums
- establish a rapid notification system to alert health services to emerging issues or risks
- support the publication of expert case reviews by our consultative councils, together with support to implement their system-level recommendations.

To achieve our third objective, **Quality and safety data analysis drives system oversight and response**, SCV will:

- work with consumers, clinicians and VAHI to establish new quality and safety clinician-driven reports for the sector and the public using existing data sets
- work with consumers, clinicians and VAHI to identify new measures for inclusion in quality and safety reports
- work with VAHI to provide timely, transparent and accessible data for clinicians and organisations to drive improvement and innovation.





# System improvement and innovation

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We support the development, implementation and scaling of improvement and innovation programs and projects.

Time-limited quality and safety programs and projects, including those funded by the Better Care Victoria Innovation Fund, help us deliver on this strategic priority.

To achieve our first objective, **Lead improvements in priority areas**, SCV will:

- work with the sector to select and develop targeted improvement programs and objectives
- support the implementation of improvement projects, for example collaborations and partnerships
- establish a team of improvement specialists to support health services.

To achieve our second objective, **Enable innovation in priority areas**, SCV will:

- test new innovations that improve access to high-quality care by funding sector-led projects
- scale up innovation projects that demonstrate system-wide benefits.

To achieve our third objective, **Safer Care Victoria is a national and international leader in quality and safety**, SCV will ensure that:

- best practice is identified – where needed, designed – disseminated and implemented across the system
- our staff are customer focused
- we contribute to the national quality and safety agenda
- we support the development of robust quality and safety initiatives across the delivery of human services to benefit all Victorians
- we are a preferred employer and strive to continuously improve our workforce with learning and support.

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