

# Victoria's Social Recovery Framework

COVID-19 recovery

Mission Facilitation Office

September 2020

# The Social Recovery Framework will help guide decision making for a holistic recovery

## Four aims of the social recovery framework

- 1 Understand the social impacts**

Understand the social impacts of COVID-19 on Victoria and potential future impacts on service systems, including work to understand social impacts on particular cohorts and regions  
Demonstrate the relationship between social and economic recovery, including avoided costs
- 2 Provide an integrated partner to the economic recovery**

Work in close alignment with economic recovery to ensure a holistic roadmap for recovery, including support for jobs growth  
Guide policy development and decision making over the course of the recovery
- 3 Set a vision for social recovery**

Provide a clear vision, goals and principles for recovery  
Adopt an early intervention and prevention approach to avoid future costs including for people with complex needs  
Recovery planning in a pandemic environment where emergency responses continue to be required
- 4 Establish a universal framework that focuses on early intervention and areas of highest need to deliver improved outcomes for all Victorians and their communities**

Identify and respond to areas of highest vulnerability (people and place)  
Early intervention and prevention activities to avoid reliance on tertiary-end system responses  
Support a socially cohesive and inclusive recovery

# Key social recovery issues and challenges

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# The pandemic response has required unprecedented changes to the way we live and work

## Worldwide, countries have implemented strict controls on movement in response to the covid-19 pandemic

- Advising the whole population to self-isolate at home if they have symptoms
- Bans on social gatherings (including mass gatherings)
- Stopping flights and interstate travel movements
- Closure of "non-essential" workplaces (beyond the health and social care sector, utilities, and the food chain) with continued working from home for those that can
- Closure of childcare, schools, and universities
- Limiting contact for special populations (eg, care homes, prisons)

## .....but these measures also have large social, health and economic impacts.

- **Housing** – Populations living in higher density areas have a greater risk of exposure. Rental affordability, financial stress, housing stress and risk of eviction are also being experienced by vulnerable populations. Flow on consequences of economic impacts on homelessness and housing affordability.
- **Mental health** – Detrimental impacts on the mental health and wellbeing in context of significant uncertainty about the future, including timeframes for how long the crisis, and social distancing measures, will last.
- **Social isolation** – less opportunity to colleagues and friends to check in on each other and for those suffering to ask for help.
- **Justice** – Policing focus on enforcement to stop spread of covid-19. Adjustments of court system to comply with social distancing. High risk of spread if the virus enters the prison system. Social and economic risk factors for offending increased.
- **Work** – economic activities suspended, lower income, less work time, unemployment for certain occupations. Greatest impacts on women and young people. Large parts of the workforce shift to working from home.
- **Civic engagement** – reliance on new modes of communication and engagement (e.g internet) major social events impacted.
- **Gender equality** – women's economic gains at risk – jobs more under threat and may take on greater childcare responsibilities. Women account for majority of healthcare workers who are more exposed to covid.
- **Family violence** – Social isolation measures and an increase in factors known to exacerbate family violence (financial stress, drug and alcohol misuse) places victim survivors at heightened risk
- **Education and children**- Schools and training organisations transitioned to remote and flexible learning, leading to more disengaged students and families (particularly vulnerable groups), and decline in services. Kindergartens closed for many children.
- **Health** – Direct impacts on health outcomes. Significant refocusing of health system to deal with crisis.
- **Travel** – Reductions in mobility, and modal shifts in transport.
- **Tourism and public events** – significant disruptions due to social distancing (e.g. AFL grand final).
- **Arts, creative industries and cultural events** severely impacted and will remain closed for an extended period given the risks from live performances and crowded venues

The public health benefits of physical distancing is significant, with a slower spread of infection reducing the risk that health services will be overwhelmed. But we must also address the broader effects on social and health outcomes.

# We are experiencing a health crisis with significant economic & social impacts



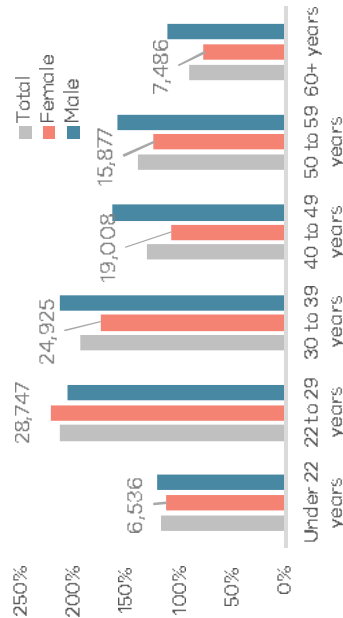
## Severe economic contraction

Victoria will likely experience its worst recession in the post-war era

- **Big spikes in unemployment** and underemployment, and a surge in the number of people receiving JobSeeker and other financial assistance.
- Job and income losses **concentrated in low pay workforces**, exacerbate challenges that low-skilled workers face.
- Income loss will place many people into economic crises, which will lead to **increased mental health challenges**, family tension and/or homelessness.

### Job Active caseloads by cohort

29 Feb 2020 to 21 Jun 2020



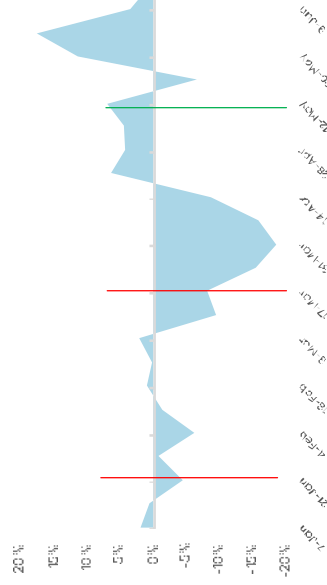
## Significant social consequences

The pandemic is increasing people's anxiety and affecting social relations

- People with mental illness or conditions such as depression, **will increasingly suffer from anxiety disorders or loneliness**
- Family violence increases with the spread and the duration of the pandemic
- **Remote learning has reinforced the social disadvantage** of exiting vulnerable cohorts
- Victorians have been **unable to engage in cultural events and spaces** (e.g. sporting events, concerts and museums are closed)
- People from CALD communities may face increased **racial discrimination** due to perceptions that outbreaks were caused by particular communities.

### New Anxiety and/or Depression Diagnoses

Victoria's Health Network, 2020



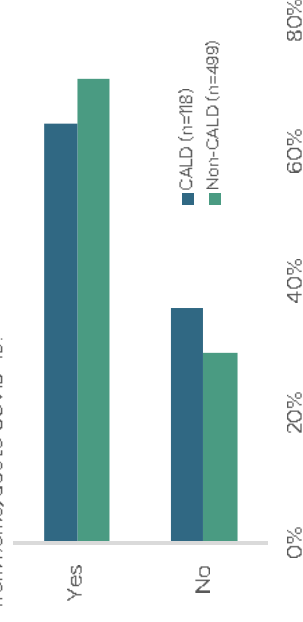
## Existing disadvantage

Victoria's health response been challenged by existing disadvantage

- Service systems were already stretched, struggling to meet existing and unmet demand prior to COVID-19.
- More significant response required in areas of high density living, insecure employment and some CALD communities.
- Specific cohorts, such as Aboriginal Victorians, LGBTIQ people, multicultural communities, people with disabilities, older people, and veterans are particularly vulnerable. People in contact with the justice system (including victims) are also particularly vulnerable.
- Past experience has shown pandemics exacerbate social inequality unless effective countermeasures are taken

### Are you able to work from home?

Has your employer permitted you to work remotely (i.e. work from home) due to COVID-19?



# Demand for social services is expected to rise

*While the social impacts of COVID-19 are complex and hard to model, compounded disadvantage, client complexity and reduced service provision (including risk assessments and delivery of therapeutic support) during the pandemic will see demand increase across many justice and social services.*

<p><b>Increased mental health issues</b></p> <p>Beyond Blue reports a 60 per cent increase over April and May 2020 and a 47 per cent increase in June 2020 compared to 2019. Rates of self harm among children have risen by a third the past 6 weeks.</p>	<p><b>Increases in complexity of family violence cases</b></p> <p>Family Violence services have reported an increase in complexity and changing nature of presentations of cases since the beginning of COVID-19 restrictions in Victoria.</p>	<p><b>Increased substance use</b></p> <p>Calls to the National Alcohol and Other Drugs hotline have doubled compared with 2019.</p>
<p><b>ED presentations for mental health reasons</b></p>	<p><b>Survey of Victorian frontline family violence workers – participants who agree that there has been an increase in the:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>86% Complexity of women's needs</li> <li>59% Severity of violence</li> <li>50% Frequency of violence against women</li> </ul>	<p><b>New clients to drug and alcohol treatment services</b></p>

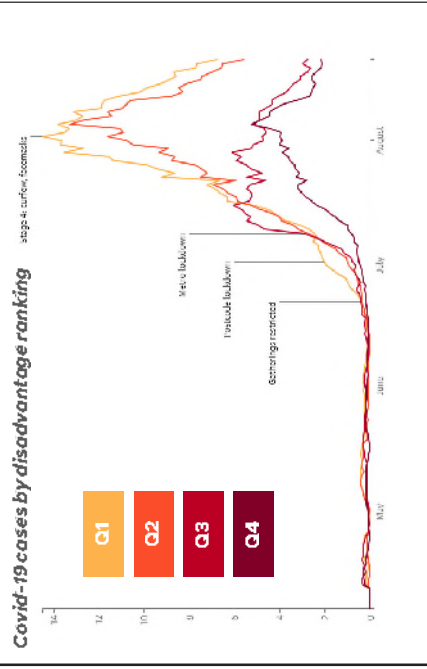
**With rising demand and an increasingly constrained fiscal environment, a greater focus on prevention and early intervention will promote better outcomes for Victorians and future savings for the government.**

**This must be underpinned by a social investment approach and evidence-base, identification and maintenance of system and service reforms resulting from COVID-19 that improve access and flexibility of services.**

# COVID-19 will entrench and compound existing disadvantage unless effective counter measures are taken

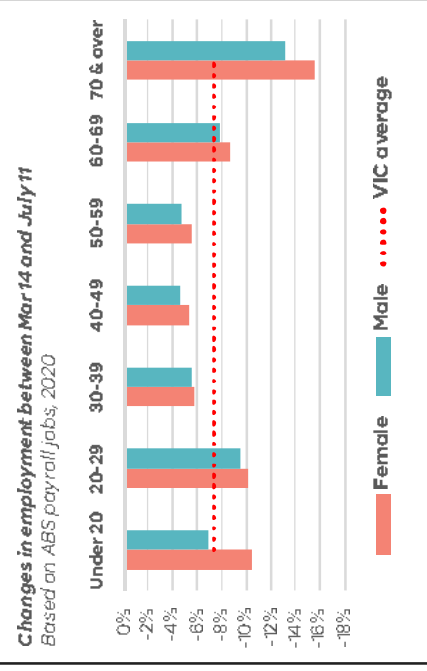
## The effects of COVID-19 are stronger in disadvantaged areas

- These differences are due to a combination of pre-existing social and economic disadvantage, the geographic distribution of people and businesses vulnerable to the covid-19 impacts.
- Particular places of vulnerability are Melbourne, Bright, Orbst, Carlton and Towong.
- Recent research has also shown the pandemic will reinforce the ongoing trend towards suburbanisation of inequality.



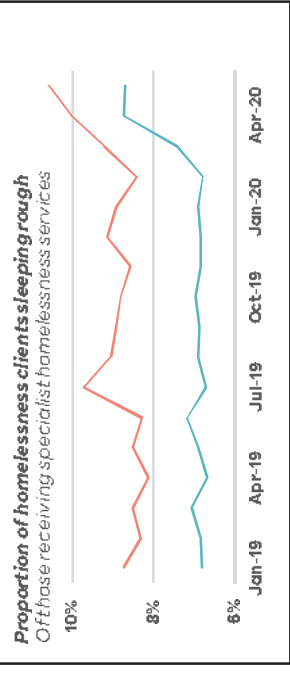
## The biggest impacts of COVID-19 are being felt by women and young people

- Victorian women have lost more jobs than men since the pandemic began and single mothers, and migrant women risk being locked out of the job market.
- Those who have reported significantly greater odds of high psychological distress were younger, female, had lost their job and had lower social interactions
- Young people bear the brunt of most labour market disruptions. Research suggests the effects will be both immediate and long-term.



## People with complex needs are most at risk

- Struggling students, will have slipped further back – the achievement gap widens at triple the rate in remote schooling compared to regular class.
- Aboriginal Victorians will be disproportionately affected by the broader socio-economic impacts.
- The pandemic will exacerbate challenges for people with disabilities and complex clients who are at high risk of increased disconnection and social isolation.
- The pandemic will exacerbate challenges for people exiting the justice system, including access to stable accommodation and wrap around supports to address existing complexities.



# New cohorts are at risk and will require social supports

*The pandemic and response have impacted many Victorian's in ways previously unimaginable to them, with a significant number needing government or social supports for the first time*

## Drivers of new social pressures

Compounding economic and mental and physical health pressures are affecting Victorian's who were not previously considered vulnerable.

Novel social isolation and distancing measures helping to control the virus, are also limiting our ability to connect with others.

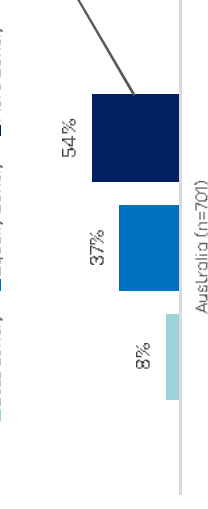
Social cohesion within and across communities is critical to people's health, wellbeing and safety and a well-functioning society. People from CALD communities may face increased racial discrimination

While human connections can be partly sustained by technology, not attending school the workplace, or playing sport, means there are less opportunities to connect with others.

### Loneliness during the COVID-19 pandemic

April to June

Less Lonely Equally Lonely More Lonely



54% of Australians felt more lonely during April - June

## Cohorts newly impacted

- Women** have experience higher levels of job loss or reduced hours. There has also been a significant drop in the participation rate, implying women have assumed the bulk of caring, leading to reduced financial independence and social interaction.
- Young people** who may have been cushioned by social networks or families in the past have be exposed with the declining labour market.
- Families** may be under new pressures given changes in financial circumstances.
- People with no prior mental health history** may develop symptoms given broad impacts across the community including loneliness, social isolation, changes in circumstances
- Frontline workers** (e.g. in healthcare and other social care roles) are at particular risk of stress and burnout in the face of the pandemic.



# The pandemic has created the need and opportunity for reform

## The crisis has rapidly changed the way people work, how services are delivered, and highlighted areas of system vulnerability

The pandemic has brought into focus social issues such as the digital divide, public housing, engagement with multicultural communities, casualisation of the workforce, mental health, and the quality of aged care.

There is an opportunity to respond to these issues in a new way and refocus reform efforts as public priorities change.

As restrictions are eased there is a chance to get ahead of new behaviours and rhythms that will rapidly become embedded.

Noting the public's appetite for change will likely shrink as the crisis gradually recedes and there is may be resistance to changes which could disrupt Victoria's economic recovery

## The crisis is impacting regions and places in different ways, and targeted place-based responses will be required

Place-based approaches are needed that recognise the diverse range of local factors that are impacting people's lives and provide for tailored responses across portfolios.

Targeted calibration of services and supports will help ensure that all communities recover and thrive following the impacts of Covid-19

## ... these changes create an opportunity to push for positive structural changes and policy objectives

- Developing integrated service models to address the needs of common clients with multiple and complex needs
- Go digital (and close digital divide) for example leveraging models of care in the health and social sector which have been transformed using virtual delivery
- Use data about common clients and vulnerable communicates and places to more effectively target and provide early intervention actions.
- Through a gender lens across all actions ensure more equitable outcomes
- Create a stronger and more inclusive society by targeting responses to most disadvantaged.
- Regulatory reform for social services to address existing gaps and safeguard the quality and safety of service provision
- Invest in social infrastructure e.g. physical facilities, spaces, services and networks that allow people to access social services and that support the quality of life and wellbeing of communities.
- Focus on federal-state cooperation through the recovery, including tough reforms on funding and responsibilities.
- Explore public sector workforce reform, including deployment of social services workforces to meet surge capacity.
- Harness new models of engagement, in particular with multicultural communities, including to address racial discrimination (e.g. developing an anti-racism strategy)
- Integrated governance structures to create efficiencies in government decision-making processes and implementation as part of BAU
- Embed innovative approaches that have been adopted due to the pandemic (e.g. increased use of telehealth, more out-of-hospital care, standardised care pathways).
- Build on education about consumer rights to protect increasingly vulnerable consumers, and enhance education and awareness for renters.
- Boosting support for people in financial distress as a result of COVID-19
- Shaping service delivery models to focus on early intervention and avoiding the community impact and social services costs of reducing the need for tertiary interventions.

# Social Recovery Framework

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● Overview

Key issues

Framework

Next steps

● Appendix

# A holistic recovery relies on integrating the economic and social actions

The objectives for economic and social recovery support each other and are mutually reinforcing.

## Objectives of the Social Recovery Framework

### Social Recovery Framework

- Rebuilding social and community participation
- All Victorians can access the support they need and are not worse off as a result of COVID-19
- Improving the delivery of social services and strengthen community safety

### Economic Recovery Framework

- Restoring jobs and workforce participation
- Fast track economic growth to a more productive globally competitive economy

## The social services sector can and should be a critical driver of employment and economic growth

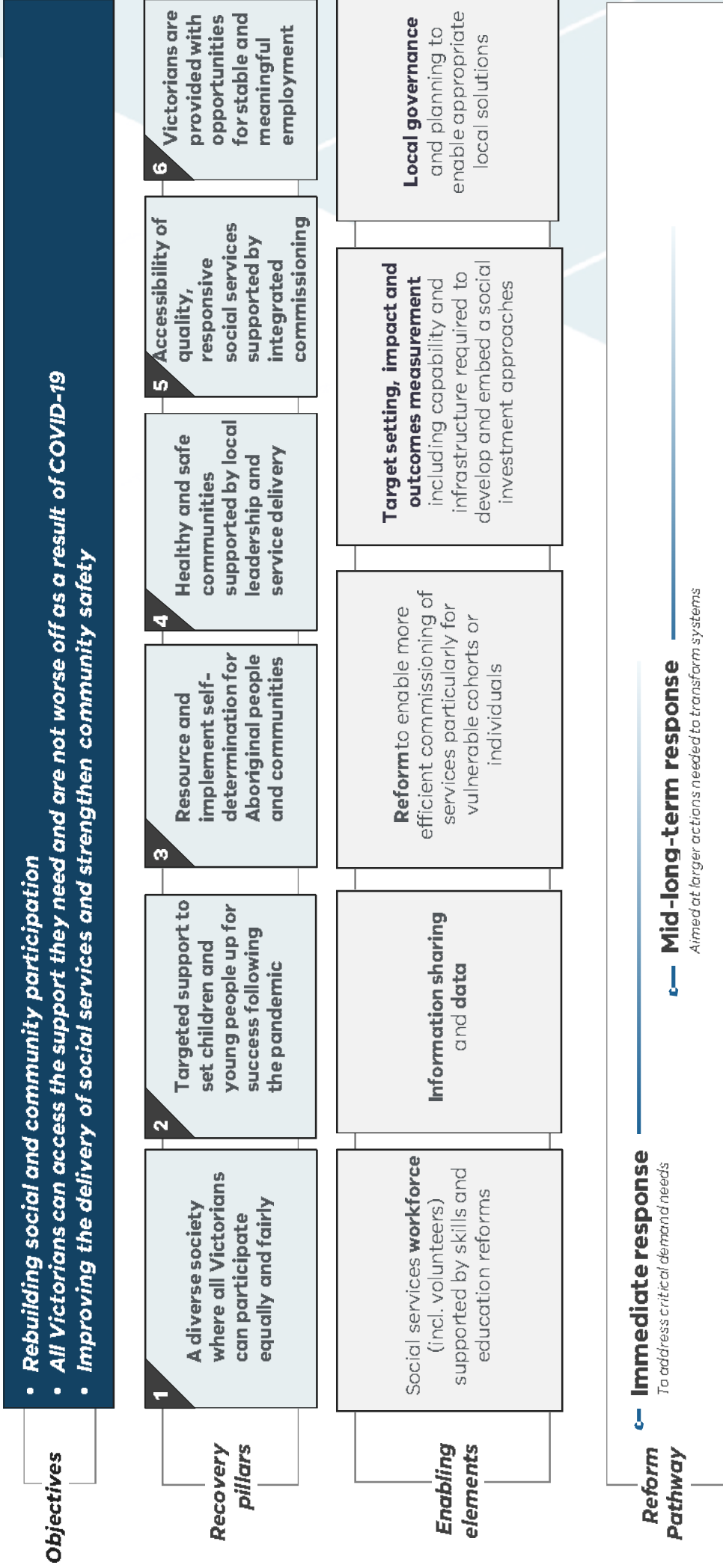
The social services sector is a significant proportion of the Victorian economy and can have a job-multiplier effect through the participation impact of services, and the creation of direct and indirect jobs.

- DET, DHHS, DJCS direct expenditure in 2018-19 was nearly \$30 billion; or over 6% of the Victorian economy.
- Overall activity in the health care, education and training sectors – which includes community and Commonwealth spending – represents approximately 13% of GSP.
- The health care sector alone, at over \$30 billion, represents a larger share of the Victorian economy than the retail trade sector.

These services and supports are essential to giving Victorians the support they need to fully participate in the economy and contribute to their local community. Our response will complement and link into **with existing major social policy reforms** including 3-year-old kinder, family violence and mental health reform, will ensure the framework considers both existing vulnerable cohorts and those at risk because of the pandemic. Complementary work will also be completed to consider and mitigate key **skills shortages** in these sectors, including modelling the change in skills supply due to lower migration, and options to increase training or reduce attrition.

The Social Recovery objectives directly support the Economic Recovery and employment through increased labour market participation, more resilient communities and social mobility, and providing targeted education and training.

# The Social Recovery Framework



# Social recovery actions will need to take place across two key time horizons

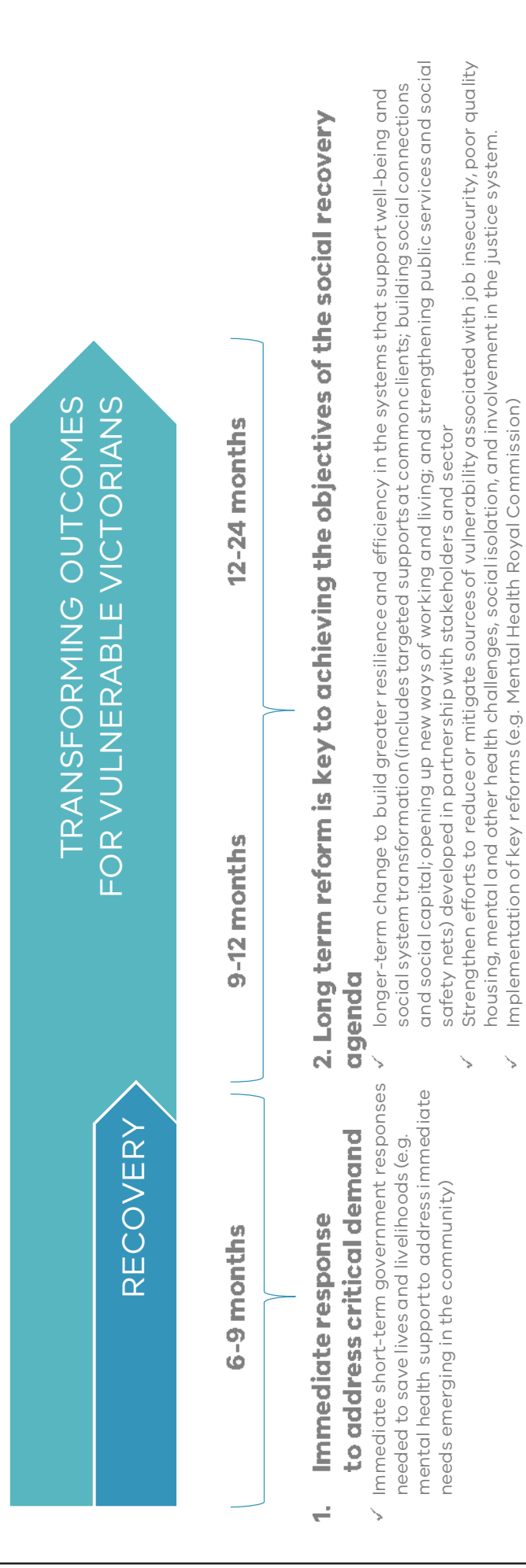
*A two-horizon approach aligns with the Economic Recovery Framework and will help to factor in workforce fatigue / readiness to support significant transformation and focus on investment to avoid future costs/demand*

## Sequencing of priorities will be important, particularly:

- Immediate recovery actions
- harnessing opportunities to interface with economic recovery
- identifying key milestones and enablers for universal participation for the most impacted parts of the community (i.e. young people/women)

**Stakeholder engagement** will be needed to support both the immediate and longer-term responses, to ensure that the recovery priorities reflect the priorities and aspirations of Victorian communities

## Timeline for framework



# Actions that boost participation and support the most vulnerable will be prioritised

## Key principles for social recovery initiatives

<b>Links to social recovery goals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restoring and boosting participation levels with a focus on those cohorts disproportionately impacted by the pandemic including people with complex needs, women and young people 'at risk' of interaction with the justice system as well as those with prolonged interaction with the justice system</li> <li>Engaging and supporting vulnerable cohorts to overcome barriers to participation</li> </ul>
<b>Time to impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Synchronized with economic recovery</li> <li>Considers the need for immediate recovery responses (e.g. mental health priority actions)</li> <li>Ensures delivery of critical services/meets demand, reducing demand on tertiary service responses (e.g. prison, youth justice, child protection, emergency departments, mental health beds)</li> <li>Participation/critical delivery in short term and participation/reform focus (early intervention, prevention) in the long term</li> <li>Adapted for implementation in current environment</li> </ul>
<b>Cost effective</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investment that helps to reduce future demand</li> <li>Seeks opportunities to leverage Commonwealth funding and initiatives</li> <li>Alignment with new fiscal parameters</li> <li>Evidence based interventions</li> </ul>
<b>Aligns with government priorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Royal Commission into Mental Health</li> <li>Family Violence Reforms</li> <li>Treaty and Aboriginal self-determination</li> <li>Early childhood and school reform plan</li> <li>Skills for Victoria's Growing Economy (incl. Macklin Review)</li> <li>Community safety and reducing demand on the justice system</li> </ul>
<b>Inclusive and fair distribution of benefits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Universal participation and wellbeing</li> <li>Benefits and supports vulnerable cohorts (vulnerability indices: 'Analytical framework for recognising all Victorians in crisis responses and recovery')</li> <li>Responses designed to respond to evidence-based demand and need and that reflects the different localised impacts</li> </ul>

# Victoria should leverage and build on positive Commonwealth State cooperation to support social recovery, in partnership with local government

Levers for recovery are shared across all levels of government. Reform, investment and data will be required from the Commonwealth to support recovery.

Income support and economic recovery is critical in supporting social recovery for vulnerable people and addressing the gendered impact. Premature reduction in Commonwealth income support in Victoria will drive further demand for state services as the economic shock increases.

Victoria will need to work collaboratively with the Commonwealth in advocating for policy change and investment – focused on areas that will have the greatest impact on social recovery – **childcare** (improving participation rates), **skills** (VET reform and uni fee reform – building a social services workforce), **industrial relations** (casual workforces).

It's also an optimal time to progress longstanding system interface issues (NDIS, aged care) and areas that would benefit from a national approach (prevention, research, information sharing, data).

Early action: Agreement on continued Commonwealth funding for the Social and Community Services Equal Remuneration Order (SACS ERO) beyond 2020-21 under the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement.

## Interjurisdictional Context

### Commonwealth Levers

- Income support – jobseeker, jobkeeper, rental assistance
- Childcare, aged care, skills, industrial relations, etc.
- Strategies: advocate for reform, investment, data
- Economic stimulus – for vulnerable cohorts – redeployment/retraining etc.
- Immigration – to address skills gaps a from low 2020 migration

### Victorian Levers

- Service delivery – Health, Mental health, housing, homelessness, FV, Children and Families, Education and skills
- Strategies: Reform, funding, policy changes
- Existing local government service delivery networks