

create
collaborate
change

vps
innovation
action
plan



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Introduction

In the Victorian Public Service (VPS), we have always looked for new approaches to improve the way we work and respond to the needs of the Victorian community. Today we face accelerating change, rising community expectations and increasingly complex, interlinked policy challenges. We are also confronted by the most difficult economic conditions seen in generations. This means we have to place an even greater emphasis on innovation.

introduction

We have many strengths that will help us meet this challenge. Already new ideas and ways of working have achieved excellent results in the VPS, some of which are highlighted in this plan. We have led the nation in a wide range of reforms, including health, skills and education, environmental management and business deregulation. We also have access to new technologies that can help us communicate more easily, break down barriers and share our perspectives.

But our most important strength is the commitment and creativity of the people who work in the VPS. There is no shortage of great ideas, passion and dedication in our workforce. In August 2008, the response to the online Innovation Forum clearly demonstrated the extent of interest in innovation. Over 3,000 employees shared hundreds of ideas about ways to improve how we work so that we can make an even bigger difference to the lives of Victorians.

Following the success of the Forum, the State Services Authority was asked to develop an Innovation Action Plan for the VPS. The development of the plan has involved extensive consultation and research and will complement existing innovation initiatives within the VPS.

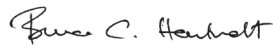
The plan is about creating the connections, and developing the skills and culture that will stimulate ideas and turn them into actions. Making innovation an integral part of how we approach our day-to-day work will result in better policies, better services and better value for the community. It will also make the VPS a leading edge and rewarding place to work.

new Ideas

This is only the first step in making sure innovation is supported throughout the VPS. The plan is a vehicle for your ideas, and will change over time to reflect your input. We encourage you to get involved in the initiatives outlined in the plan and to help promote innovation in your work area.



Helen Silver, Secretary
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and Cabinet



Bruce Hartnett, Chair
State Services Authority



Jim Betts, Secretary
Department of Transport



Greg Wilson, Secretary
Department of Sustainability
and Environment



Penny Armytage, Secretary
Department of Justice



Simon Overland,
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Richard Bolt, Secretary
Department of Primary Industries



Grant Hehir, Secretary
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and Finance



Yehudi Blacher, Secretary
Department of Planning
and Community Development



Fran Thorn, Secretary
Department of Health



Peter Dawkins, Secretary
Department of Education and
Early Childhood Development



Howard Ronaldson, Secretary
Department of Industry Innovation
and Regional Development



Gill Callister, Secretary
Department of Human Services

plan atives

Four action areas

The VPS Innovation Action Plan is designed to embed innovation across the public service. It seeks to foster a culture of innovation that leads to better outcomes for the community and more effective and efficient processes in the public service. In this environment, the generation, development and implementation of ideas is supported at all levels and everyone is encouraged to share the lessons learned from both success and failure. The plan promotes mobilising resources around challenges and opportunities and actively encourages collaboration. It harnesses new technology to support innovation and the sharing of knowledge.

This is the start of a sustained effort to stimulate the VPS capacity to innovate. The plan focuses on the following four action areas:

- › creating connections between people, ideas and opportunities
- › building innovation capability
- › generating ideas and rewarding good practice
- › sharing information and data.

Each action area has a suite of initiatives which are outlined below.

VPS Innovation Action Plan Initiatives

1. Creating connections between people, ideas and opportunities

- 1.1 VPS Hub—an open technology platform providing the virtual space for collaboration, resources, and cross-sector initiatives.
- 1.2 Innovation Zone—enables staff to lodge problems and seek solutions from across the VPS, hosted on VPS Hub.
- 1.3 Innovation Advisory Group—an innovation advocate and broker, monitors the implementation of the Innovation Action Plan.

2. Building innovation capability

- 2.1 Innovation Transfer—a secondment program for VPS staff to the private and community sectors.
- 2.2 Innovation Skills—embedding innovation skills in recruitment, learning and development, and performance management.
- 2.3 Innovation Toolbox—a collection of innovation tools, resources and best practice guides, hosted on VPS Hub.
- 2.4 Communities of Practice—opportunities to form groups of mutual interest across the VPS.

3. Generating ideas and rewarding good practice

- 3.1 Innovation Challenge—a challenge to generate new ideas to address specific public policy or service delivery challenges.
- 3.2 Micro Challenge—a challenge to save \$1 million through innovation projects that are small scale and easy to implement.
- 3.3 Innovation Awards—annual awards to recognise innovation achievement in the VPS.

4. Sharing information and data

- 4.1 Information and Data Sharing Business Case—development of a business case to identify opportunities to better share information and data across the VPS.

1 Creating connections between people, ideas and opportunities

1.1 VPS HUB

The rise of Web 2.0 technology has transformed the web into a platform for participation, collaboration and interaction. Users are increasingly able to harness rich, shared data and the collective intelligence of multiple users through tools such as blogs, wikis and social networks.

Web 2.0 technology can enable innovation in the VPS as the new tools offer fresh ways of working and collaborating. VPS Hub is an open technology platform that will use wikis, blogs and rich media to allow users to generate and discuss ideas. The Hub will provide an online space for collaboration across the VPS and act as a repository for innovation tools and resources. It will also provide the space for diffusing lessons learned from innovation projects.

The VPS Hub provides the platform for other initiatives, including Innovation Zone, the Innovation Toolbox and Communities of Practice.

1.2 INNOVATION ZONE

Innovation Zone enables VPS staff to lodge a problem or idea on VPS Hub and seek solutions or feedback from others. This open exchange will bring together diverse perspectives across the VPS, spanning the traditional boundaries of departments and business units. It supports new and different viewpoints and creates a safe environment for stress testing ideas and solutions.

Innovation Zone is inspired by a similar successful initiative in Singapore known as PS21- an ongoing reform program that helped the public sector anticipate, welcome and execute change. PS21 enables all public service staff, particularly those at the frontline, to feed their ideas into the decision-making process.

1.3 INNOVATION ADVISORY GROUP

An Innovation Advisory Group will be established to advocate and broker innovation opportunities in the VPS. The group will be responsible for:

- › brokering innovation opportunities in the VPS
- › brokering relationships with other sectors
- › monitoring the implementation of the plan
- › judging the Innovation Awards and the Innovation Challenge
- › reporting on progress to the State Coordination and Management Council.

connections

The group will have a diverse and representative membership including senior VPS representatives; external expert innovation advisors; a member of YIPAA; a member from the ANZSOG Executive Masters of Public Administration alumni; and a member of the VPS Improvement and Innovation Community of Practice. This will ensure the group engages widely with the VPS. The Chair of the State Services Authority will chair the group.

INNOVATION SPOTLIGHT—WORLD CLASS SERVICES, SMALL BUSINESS VICTORIA

The \$18 million World Class Service (WCS) initiative was announced in the 2007 Small Business Statement *Time to Thrive*. The initiative reduces the regulatory burden for Victorian business by delivering a business-centric, whole-of-government service network. It is delivered through federal, state and local government websites and the Victorian business line. In doing so, it creates connections between private sector businesses and a range of information and services from within and outside government.

WCS provides a one-stop-shop for:

- › information to solve business problems
- › fast, accurate and useful answers
- › a single account with government to easily manage transactions and forms
- › resources, training and advisors.

WCS assumes that any point of entry is the right point of entry for services. Content is multi-agency, personalised and usable, and is focused on the business needs of the clients. This includes promoting and offering services through channels such as Facebook, YouTube and business forums. The *I am a business owner* in Victoria group connects small business owners with mentors and other businesses in their own online space.

capability

2 Building innovation capability

2.1 INNOVATION TRANSFER

Innovation Transfer is a secondment program for VPS staff to the private and community sectors. VPS staff will be seconded to work on projects that are addressing innovation challenges. Secondments can significantly widen the experience of VPS staff as well as provide opportunities for cross-fertilisation of ideas. Participants will bring back new perspectives, valuable knowledge and networks that can be applied to their work in the public service.

spotlight

2.2 INNOVATION SKILLS

Successful innovation relies on imagination, collaboration, experimentation and above all, a capable workforce. A research project will be undertaken to identify the skills and capabilities necessary for the VPS to foster a culture of innovation. The identified skills will then be embedded through:

- › implementing learning and development programs
- › aligning recruitment and performance planning with required skills
- › developing an innovation skills toolkit including case studies of successful skills development programs.

INNOVATION SPOTLIGHT—BUILDING INNOVATION CAPABILITY IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT, JUSTICE, AND EARLY EDUCATION AND CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

The **Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE)** established the Strategy and Innovation Unit in 2008 as part of a series of organisational reforms designed to help DSE become a more innovative and flexible organisation. The unit operates as internal strategy consultants to divisions to help them clarify their key strategic challenges, and to respond effectively. This is based on an appreciation of the link between innovation performance and the quality of strategic management. The unit works to promote the development of a culture of innovation in DSE through a wide range of activities including innovation seminars, visits from leading innovation practitioners, and the use of social networking tools.

The **Innovation and Strategy Unit** was created in the Department of Justice as an internal think-tank to provide evidence based practical solutions that enable improvements to the justice system. The unit's work includes managing strategic research across the Justice portfolio; facilitating reduction of delays in the criminal justice system; developing statistical models of the justice system; applying a sophisticated understanding of economics in the justice environment; and developing a strategic foresight capability. The unit is also fostering relationships with thought-leaders, acting as a knowledge repository, promoting innovation initiatives across the Justice portfolio and providing a strategic consultancy service.

The role of the **Innovation and Next Practice Division** in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) is to manage and capture the benefits of innovation to the policy development cycle and to accelerate best practice. The division is implementing Next Practice Field Trials to identify, support and evaluate exemplars of practitioner led innovation. The field trials are designed to inform future DEECD policies and to develop new practices. DEECD profiles its Portfolio of Innovation through an annual education Innovation Showcase which celebrates the success of Victorian teachers and early childhood service providers who are putting creative ideas into practice. The Innovation Showcase attracts a breadth of educators and policy makers and promotes on-going collaboration to support learning and improved practices across the education system.

innovation toolbox

2.3 INNOVATION TOOLBOX

VPS Hub will include a toolbox of practical innovation resources to support the VPS to generate fresh ideas and innovative solutions. Resources will include:

- › advice on developing innovation ideas and how to pitch them
- › innovation articles and research
- › thinking tools and techniques such as De Bono's six thinking hats and mind mapping
- › evaluation guides
- › publications and working papers.

2.4 COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Communities of practice enable people with common interests to come together to share information, build knowledge, develop expertise and solve problems. VPS Hub will provide a space for innovation groups to form and collaborate, including:

- › exploring innovation topics of interest
- › researching problems and generate solutions
- › testing ideas
- › exchanging lessons learned.

INNOVATION SPOTLIGHT—INNOVATION AND IMPROVEMENT COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

The Innovation and Improvement Community of Practice is a forum for practitioners across the Victorian government with a common interest in promoting innovative approaches to providing public services and fostering a culture of continuous improvement. The Department of Treasury and Finance coordinates the community which is auspiced by the VPS Continuous Improvement Network. The community has around 80 members from 11 Victorian departments and nine agencies.

Members of the community aim to learn from each other, connect with others doing similar work, solve problems together and share successes and findings. The community has undertaken a number of activities including speed networking to gain a better understanding of the range of knowledge, skills and expertise available within the group, and development of a wiki to link members and their thinking. The community has already provided valuable peer support; generated a growing body of information, knowledge and intellectual capital; and elevated levels of public service capability and confidence to tackle problems requiring new and different approaches.

stimulating

3 Stimulating innovation and rewarding good practice

3.1 INNOVATION CHALLENGE

In the Innovation Challenge, ideas will be sought from VPS staff to address specific public policy or service delivery challenges. The challenge harnesses thinking across the VPS that spans disciplines and departments in order to provide fresh perspectives on complex problems and issues.

The challenge will be held over a fixed time period and involves the following stages:

- › proposals are submitted from either individuals or teams using a simple template
- › the Innovation Advisory Group assesses the proposals and selects a short list
- › short listed entries will receive dedicated time offline to develop a business case or feasibility study for their idea.

Finalists will present their business case or feasibility study to the Premier.

3.2 MICRO CHALLENGE

The Micro Challenge focuses on the small changes that can make a difference. A challenge will be issued to all of the VPS to save \$1 million through micro innovation projects of any size that can be implemented within four weeks. Hosted on VPS Hub, a barometer will monitor and estimate the financial savings. Savings will be aggregated across departments.

Projects can be as 'micro' as merging two forms into one. The Micro Challenge demonstrates that innovation is about all ideas, no matter how small. All micro-innovators will be recognised at a function to celebrate the efforts of all involved, held after the challenge target has been met.

innovation award

3.3 INNOVATION AWARDS

The Innovation Awards recognise innovation achievement in the VPS. Two awards will be given as part of IPAA's *Leadership in the Public Sector Awards* - innovation in policy development and innovation in service delivery. The award entries will contribute to a growing repository of successful VPS innovation case studies. This will provide a significant learning opportunity for the VPS and teaching cases could also be developed by an appropriate teaching body such as the Australia and New Zealand School of Government.

INNOVATION SPOTLIGHT—POLICY IDOL, DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER AND CABINET

In 2007, the Policy and Cabinet Group (PCG) of the Department of Premier and Cabinet in Victoria (DPC) held an internal competition called Policy Idol. The idea for the competition came from a PCG staff member who felt that other PCG members had ideas that could add value to the division.

All levels of policy officers within PCG were invited to email their ideas into the competition. As an incentive, all entrants were able to pitch their idea to a panel of senior PCG executives, including a Deputy Secretary, who would decide on the winner. The winner received a week offline from their existing role to develop a feasibility study for their idea.

information

4 Sharing information and data

4.1 INFORMATION AND DATA SHARING BUSINESS CASE

The VPS holds a wealth of information and data, and the free flow of information plays a crucial role in driving innovation. Limited access to information and data blocks innovation. Making information more freely available is a key driver for innovation in the VPS. A business case will be developed to scope improvements in the sharing of information and data across the VPS. The business case will address the accessibility of data and the ease with which data can be used and reused.

INNOVATION SPOTLIGHT—ENVIRONMENTAL SYSTEMS MODELLING PLATFORM

The EnSym – the Environmental Systems Modelling Platform – is a DSE initiative which links science with natural resource management and decision-making.

The modelling platform was developed by the Victorian Government to assist in the efficient allocation of environmental funds to private landholders. EnSym is a computer program that helps make evidence-based decisions about how and where to best spend natural resource management funds for maximum environmental value. It allows the Victorian Government and its agencies to report on environmental outcomes achieved.

EnSym gathers together data from across the VPS and the Commonwealth. This data is fed into a range of scientific models to help understand the impact actions have on the landscape, such as revegetation and weed control. These models are grouped into tool boxes, and cover such areas as biophysical and surface dynamics, groundwater dynamics, eco-systems and spatial context and agents-based and behavioural tools.

Recent examples of how EnSym has been used include:

- › EcoTender – a process to achieve multiple environmental outcomes on private land
- › Good Neighbour Tender – weed management works providing environmental benefits to natural vegetation on public and private land.

Implementing the Action Plan

DPC will be responsible for coordinating the implementation of the Action Plan and will work closely with departments and practitioners in the roll-out of the initiatives. DPC will also work closely with the Victorian Public Sector Continuous Improvement Network. The Innovation Advisory Group will oversee the implementation of the plan and monitor its progress. Regular progress reports will be provided to the State Coordination and Management Council.

Innovation is ultimately about experimentation. The plan and its initiatives are the first steps of an iterative process of stimulating innovation in the VPS. Implementation of the initiatives will be phased to ensure a sustained approach. This also offers the potential to learn and build on successes as well as create momentum for future initiatives. An evaluation will be conducted after the first two years to inform the future direction of the plan.

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time frame

The implementation timeframe over the next two years is as follows:

Action	Initiative	Year 1 (2009/10)	Year 2 (2010/2011)
Creating connections between people, ideas and opportunities	VPS Hub	✓	ongoing
	Innovation Zone	✓	ongoing
	Innovation Advisory Group	✓	✓
Building innovation capability	Innovation Transfer	✓	✓
	Innovation Skills	Stage 1	Stage 2
	Innovation Resource Toolbox	✓	ongoing
	Communities of practice	✓	ongoing
Generating ideas and rewarding good practice	Innovation Challenge	✓	
	Micro Challenge		✓
	Innovation Awards	✓	✓
Sharing information and data	Information and Data Sharing Business Case	Stage 1	Stage 2

Just as implementation will be iterative, so too will be the approach to performance measurement. A performance measurement framework will be developed to track the plan's outcomes. This framework will be flexible so it can respond to the lessons learned from the implementation of initiatives over time.

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create strategies to manage change

If you would like to receive this publication in an accessible format, such as large print or audio, please telephone 9651 5814 (TTY), or email actionplan@dpc.vic.gov.au. This document is also available in an accessible format on the Internet at www.dpc.vic.gov.au.

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