

Environment Protection Authority Victoria

Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Statement

2024-2027



Contents



EPA acknowledges Aboriginal people as the first peoples and Traditional Custodians of the land and water on which we live, work and depend. We pay respect to Aboriginal Elders past and present. As Victoria's environmental regulator, we pay respect to how Country has been protected and cared for by Aboriginal people over many tens of thousands of years. We acknowledge the unique spiritual and cultural significance of land, water and all that is in the environment to Aboriginal people and Traditional Custodians – and the continuing connection and aspirations for Country.

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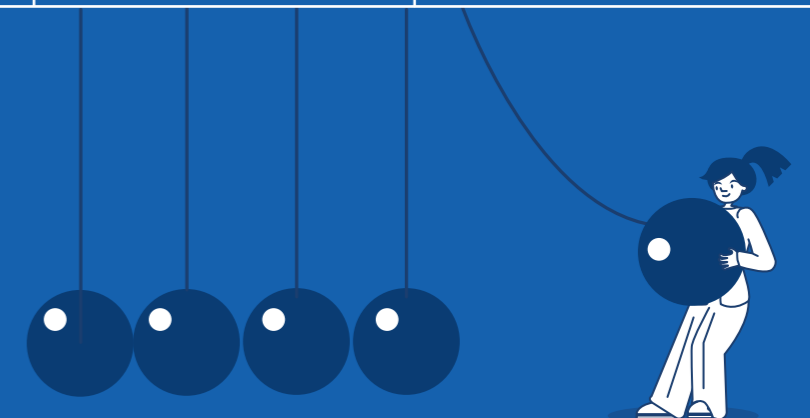


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About EPA Victoria

It's important that as Victoria's environmental regulator and as a public sector organisation, we hold ourselves to high standards of environmental, social and governance performance. We must walk the talk if we expect others to do the same.

Lee Miezis
Chief Executive Officer



Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA) was created in 1971 as Victoria's independent environmental regulator.

EPA is a statutory authority established under the *Environment Protection Act 2017*. EPA's Governing Board is appointed by the Governor-in-Council on the recommendation of the Minister for Environment. The Governing Board is responsible for governance and strategy in pursuit of EPA's objective – to protect human health and the environment by reducing the harmful effects of pollution and waste.

Victoria's environment protection laws give EPA the tools, powers and authority needed to protect our communities and environment. The general environmental duty (GED) is the centrepiece of these laws. The GED requires all Victorians to understand risks to human health and the environment, and take reasonably practicable steps to eliminate or minimise those risks in undertaking an activity.

Our Strategic Plan 2022–27 defines our purpose and the outcomes we want to see by 2027:



Our environment is cleaner and communities are healthier



All Victorians reduce their environmental risks



We have impact and influence.

The plan also describes the strategic choices we have made to secure these outcomes, what we aim to achieve and how we will measure our performance.

In delivering our strategic plan, every EPA team member, in all aspects of our work, lives the organisational values of integrity, courage, connection, excellence and tenacity.

We also model the Victorian Public Sector values of responsiveness, impartiality, accountability, respect, leadership and human rights.

About this ESG Statement

It was great to work on this fantastic project and gain insight to how EPA is becoming a world leader in sustainable practices. I'm excited to witness EPA's dedication to climate action and embracing First Nations culture.

Tassia De Luca
Senior Advisor and Project Leader – ESG statement



EPA is proud to present our inaugural **Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Statement**. This statement outlines our commitments to sustainable and ethical practices – including meeting our GED. It describes:

How we will **minimise our own impact on the environment**, including our carbon footprint and waste generation, and how we will respond to risks presented by climate change.



How we will **treat the different groups of people we interact with** – staff, community members, those we regulate, delivery partners and suppliers.



How we will **ensure compliance** with regulations, best practice, and corporate policies, including our leadership and management.



The statement establishes targets and measures for the period 2024 to 2027 so we can monitor and report on our performance in meeting our commitments.

Each ESG pillar – environmental, social, and governance – assists in identifying key non-financial risks and opportunities. ESG not only considers elements such as climate change and human rights, but also how we are identifying, managing, addressing and enhancing processes with regards to each pillar.

EPA wants to be a role model organisation for sustainable and ethical practices. This statement requires us to walk the talk – to hold ourselves to account to the high levels of performance we expect of others as Victoria's environmental regulator.

We will be open, honest and transparent about our performance in meeting the targets we have set for ourselves, using the metrics identified in this statement to report each year in our annual report of operations.

This statement should be read alongside our Strategic Plan 2022–27 and annual delivery plans. Meeting our commitments will require coordinated and whole-of-organisation action, with ESG priorities embedded into strategic and operational planning and delivery.

Our success depends on our relationships. We will continue to partner with communities, businesses, government and non-government organisations to deliver our ESG priorities – as an organisation and as Victoria's environmental regulator – for the benefit of local communities and broader society.

The goals of this ESG Statement

This ESG Statement will guide us in relation to the diverse and increasingly complex range of environmental, social and governance issues and opportunities we face now and into the future. Leveraging our regulatory, scientific and technical capabilities, we will continue to advance a proactive and adaptive approach to meet our ESG commitments.

For 2024 to 2027, our focus is on establishing and strengthening the core organisational settings that enable excellence in our ESG performance and disclosure reporting. This will enable us to set a broader range of ambitious targets going forward, including our use of electric vehicles, other air emissions such as nitrogen oxides and sulphur oxides and information accessibility. In the future we also want to align to international standards such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB).



Alignment to the Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were set up in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly to provide a blueprint for achieving a better and more sustainable future for all. While we contribute to all SDGs, our work at EPA mostly aligns with the following goals.



Our ESG priorities

We have identified our priority ESG focus areas for 2024 to 2027



Energy and emissions management

Reduce energy use and emissions from our work and supply chain to minimise our contribution to climate change



Waste management and circularity

Avoid or minimise the generation of waste from our work, including in our offices and laboratories. Increase the percentage of materials that are reused and recycled, prioritising and promoting the waste hierarchy and circular economy principles



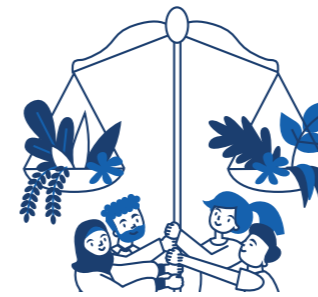
Health, safety and wellbeing

Minimise harm, through proactive risk management, strengthening our culture and systems and prioritising our people's mental and physical health, safety and wellbeing



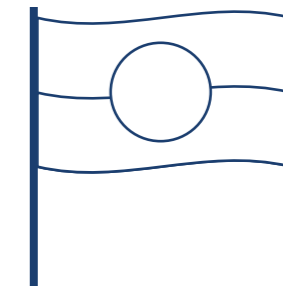
Diversity, equity and inclusion

Celebrate the diversity of our communities, promote equity through providing opportunities for our people to have meaningful impact and prioritise inclusion as a practice



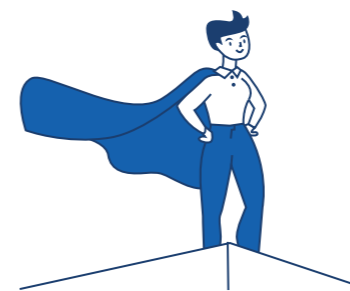
Environmental justice

Promote and implement fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies



Embracing First Nations culture

Ensure our work is founded on respect, the importance of understanding First Nations culture and the principles of self-determination



Ethical business conduct and integrity

Proper management of conflicts of interest, receipt and provision of gifts, benefits and hospitality and fraud and corruption risks, ensuring ethical action and decision making by all staff.



Transparency and disclosure

Transparently share environmental, social and governance information

I'm excited about reducing our environmental impact by lowering our emissions and diverting waste from landfill. It's important we meet the high levels of performance we expect of others.

Kerrod Moller-Nielsen
Senior Environment Protection Officer



Our ESG priorities in more detail

For our priority ESG focus areas we have set our commitments, targets, key performance indicators (KPIs) and performance metrics to monitor and demonstrate our progress.

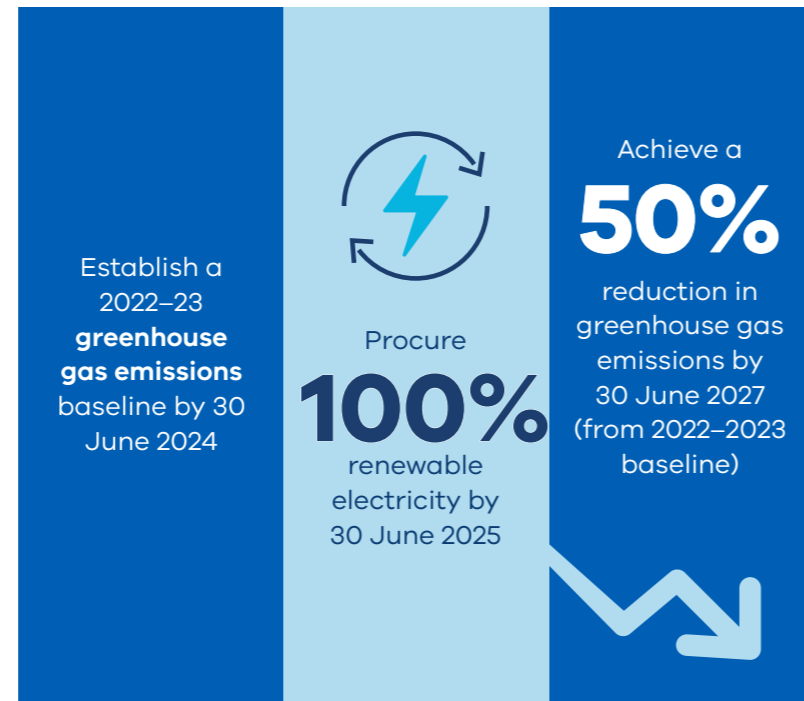


Energy and emissions management

Commitment:

Demonstrating leadership in climate action by understanding our impacts and reducing energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions through effective energy management, behaviour change and sustainable supply chain management practices

Targets



KPI:

- Reduction in Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions [tCO₂e]

Performance metrics:

- Percentage of electricity purchased as renewable electricity
- Total GHG emissions per FTE [tCO₂e/FTE]
- Total GHG emissions per unit of office area [tCO₂e/FTE/m²]

Alignment to SDGs:



Commitment: A continued action or practice that EPA is dedicated to upholding

Target: A measurable, time-bound action.

KPI: The measure of performance

Performance metrics: Supporting data to track KPIs

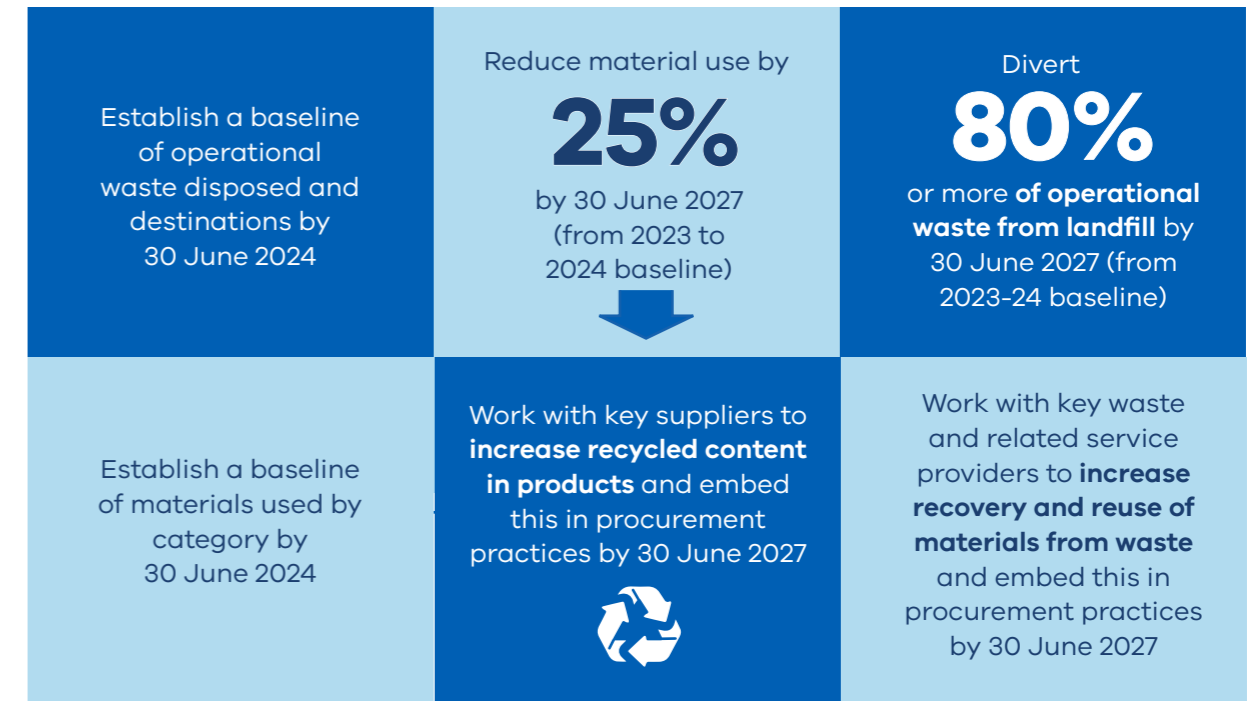


Waste management and circularity

Commitment:

Being an exemplar of good waste management and circularity by reducing overall resource use, the amount of waste generated as well as maximising reuse, re-purposing and recycling of materials to divert waste from landfill

Targets



KPIs:

- Use of recycled content
- Reduction in materials consumption
- Increase in recycling rate [% of total waste]

Performance metrics:

- Total units of operational waste disposed of by destination [kg/year]
- Units of operational waste disposed by destination [kg/FTE]
- Material used by category [kg/FTE]

Alignment to SDGs:





Health, safety and wellbeing

Commitment:

Prioritising the physical and psychosocial health of our staff through strong and accountable leadership, proactive and consultative risk management, and actively promoting and supporting physical and mental wellbeing

Targets



KPIs:

- Wellbeing score from staff-wide surveys
- Medically treated injury frequency rate
- Lost-time injury frequency rate
- Average cost of a standard injury claim

Performance metrics:

- Percentage of corrective actions closed within agreed timeline
- Percentage of safety assurance inspections conducted to annual plan
- Work hours [hours/FTE]

Alignment to SDGs:



Diversity, equity and inclusion

Commitment:

Ensuring our workforce diversity reflects our communities we serve and providing equitable opportunities for our staff to succeed

Targets



KPIs:

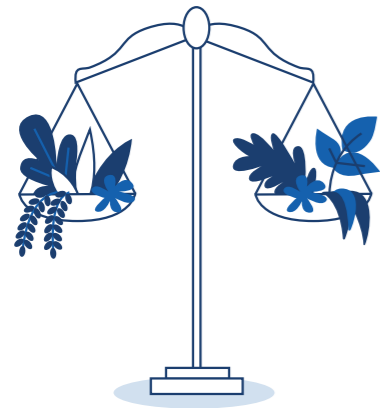
- Gender pay gap
- Workforce diversity profile
- Belonging score from staff-wide surveys

Performance metrics:

- Attrition rate rates by gender, age and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities
- Internal promotion rates by gender, age and CALD communities
- Pay equity rate by diversity factor [%]

Alignment to SDGs:





Environmental justice

Commitment:

Supporting an environment where all people, enjoy equal protection from environmental harm, and equal access to decision-making process to maintain a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work

Target

Environmental justice outcomes are achieved through all organisational priorities, decisions and regulatory functions utilising the powers, duties and functions of the Environment Protection Act 2017 by 30 June 2027

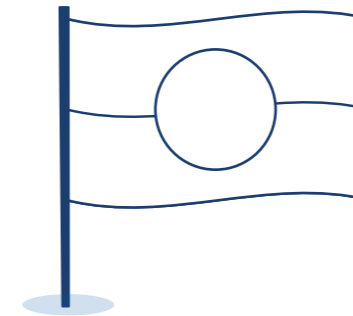
KPIs:

- Environmental justice policy developed that defines how the principles and elements of environmental justice will be applied to EPA's priorities, decision-making and regulatory functions by 31 December 2024
- Environmental Justice Action Plan developed to address issues of overburden in identified Victorian communities by 30 June 2026
- Restorative justice options are considered in all enforcement actions and pursued where appropriate by 30 June 2026

Performance metrics:

- Percentage of regulatory actions that demonstrate application of environmental justice by EPA
- Number and percentage of restorative justice outcomes in enforcement action taken by EPA

Alignment to SDGs:



Embracing First Nations culture

Commitment:

Co-designing with Traditional Owners, approaches to better achieve structural inclusion and mutual capability building. Embed cultural values and knowledge in Victoria's environment protection framework

Targets

Develop two-way knowledge, advisory and engagement pathways between EPA and First Nations by 30 June 2026

Develop partnership programs and collaborations with First Nations to achieve environment protection outcomes on Country by 30 June 2026

KPIs:

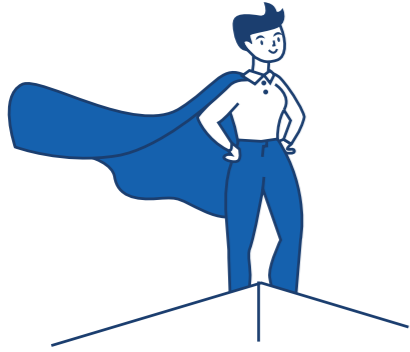
- First Nations advisory body and associated processes established
- Increase in knowledge sharing between EPA and Traditional Owner Corporations / groups
- Increase in the number of regulatory decisions and actions that considers Traditional Owner information and knowledge

Performance metrics:

- Number of formal interactions between EPA and Traditional Owner Corporations / groups
- Percentage of regulatory decisions by EPA that consider Traditional information and knowledge
- Percentage of staff who have completed cultural safety/competency training and on Country education

Alignment to SDGs:





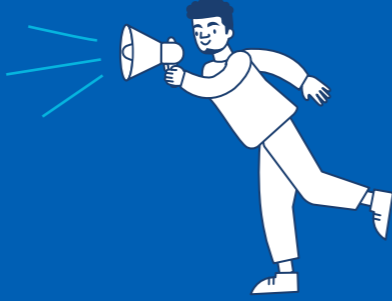
Ethical business conduct and integrity

Commitment:

Managing and minimising risk factors for conflicts of interest, fraud, corruption and other losses across our operations and organisational governance, ensuring all our decisions, actions and behaviours meet community expectations and integrity standards

Target 

No instances of non-conformance with the Victorian Public Sector (VPS) Code of Conduct, Public Administration Act 2004 and the Financial Management Act 1994



KPIs:

- Number of non-compliances with the Code of Conduct for VPS Employees
- Number of non-compliances with the Public Administration Act 2004
- Number of non-compliances with the Financial Management Act 1994. All controls identified, with respect to conflicts of interest, fraud and corruption are assessed as effective

Performance metrics:

- Biennial assessments of fraud exposures at organisational, business unit and process level in line with AS ISO 31000:2018 and the Victorian Government Risk Management Framework
- Percentage of identified integrity risks managed within target risk rating
- Percentage of staff who have completed mandatory induction and annual refresher training on the VPS Code of Conduct and EPA's Integrity Framework
- Compliance with the Standing Directions issued under the Financial Management Act 1994

Alignment to SDGs:



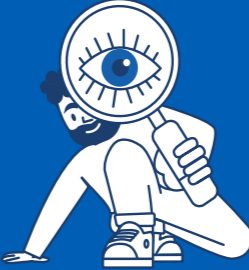
Transparency and disclosure


Commitment:

Providing stakeholders with clear, visible and reliable knowledge and information regarding the actions and activities of EPA

Targets 

Maintain accessible information about regulatory decisions





Disclose EPA's ESG performance starting with the 2023–24 financial year

KPIs:

- Provide annual disclosures on EPA's ESG performance in the annual report of operations
- Provide disclosures about regulatory decisions

Performance metrics:

- Percentage of information assets published on EPA's website
- Average time to respond to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests
- Percentage of regulatory decisions supported by documented reasons

Alignment to SDGs:



How we identified our ESG priorities

We used a robust process to identify our ESG priorities.

Our statement sets a good example to help our stakeholders understand how to manage environmental and social risks. We can't expect others to do the right thing if we don't do it ourselves.

Debra Hicks
Senior Procurement Officer



External trends analysis

We assessed the external landscape and the industry trends which are relevant, or likely to be increasingly relevant to EPA.



Enterprise current state assessment

We reviewed our internal policies, procedures, strategies and risk management processes to assess how we are currently managing ESG within our organisation.



Peer benchmarking

We reviewed the goals, commitments and targets of peer organisations, to evaluate priority topics across the sector.



Prioritisation process

Once topics and strategic themes were determined, we ran a prioritisation process with our Senior Executive Committee. This resulted in identification of our 8 highest priorities. Although commitments, targets and key performance indicators (KPIs) have been set for priority focus areas, we consider all identified topics as important to our organisation and we have management plans in place.

Our ESG foundations

Strong foundations ensure safe and ethical conduct within EPA and underpin our ESG commitments.

At EPA, we really care about reducing our impact on people and the planet. By setting clear targets and measures, we show we're willing to be held to account.

Eleanor Pritchard
Senior Regulatory Assurance Officer



Oversight



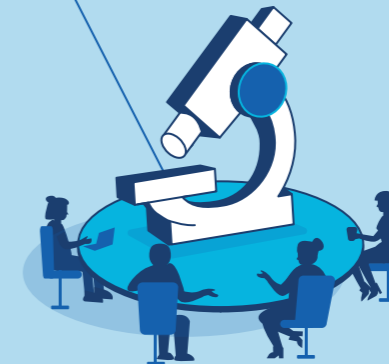
EPA's Governing Board

EPA's Governing Board is established under section 361 of the Environment Protection Act 2017 and is responsible for ensuring our statutory objective and functions are furthered in an efficient and effective way. Three sub-committees report directly to our Governing Board.



The Executive Remuneration and Succession Committee (ERSC)

Provides advice and information to assist our Governing Board in discharging its responsibilities relating to executive remuneration and succession planning.



The Science, Health and Engineering Advisory Committee (SHEAC)

Supports our Governing Board in its role of overseeing the implementation of EPA's strategic plan with respect to maintaining and growing our scientific excellence and supporting EPA's role in protecting human health and the environment.



The Risk and Audit Committee (RAC)

Supports the Governing Board Chair and Chief Executive Officer to fulfill their obligations under the Financial Management Act 1994, focusing on:

- financial reporting
- internal and external audit
- risk management
- compliance and control
- the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) control environment.



Technology Working Group (TWG)

Supports the RAC to uphold our information security standards and the United States' National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Cyber Security Framework.

We implemented a new operating model on 1 November 2021, designed to allow for greater organisational flexibility and agility; responding quickly to changes to our priorities as well as the external environment. New operational governance arrangements were also put in place.

We recognise that we have a responsibility for our environmental footprint. We have a responsibility to our people and Victorians to be progressive and excellent in what we do.

Louise Paech
Lead Counsel – Civil Litigation and Advice



The Senior Executive Committee (SEC)

The most senior operational governance committee, whose purpose is to:

- manage implementation of the annual delivery plan
- provide operational direction
- set objectives and policies
- model organisational culture and values
- provide oversight on organisation-wide performance, people-related matters and risk.

The sub-committees reporting to SEC include:



Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee (HSWC)

Consultative forum between management and employees to address health, safety and wellbeing matters.



Finance and Performance Sub-Committee (FPSC)

Monitors organisation-wide financial performance and performance against our Annual Delivery Plan, Statement of Expectations and Budget Paper 3 measures.



People Sub-Committee (PSC)

Provides a dedicated focus on projects, initiatives and performance related to our people including strengthening culture, engagement and wellbeing.



Crisis Leadership Committee (CLC)

When required, a Crisis Leadership Committee assumes a coordination role during disruptive events that cannot be managed or resolved using standard or emergency management processes.



Regulatory Sub-Committee (RSC)

Reviews our regulatory strategy and associated decisions, assessing and providing advice on proposed regulatory interventions.

Policy and planning



Our governance structure is underpinned by a Corporate Compliance Framework and Business Continuity Management Framework, as well as organisational policies and procedures.

Policy

Key internal organisational policies include (but are not limited to):

- Fraud Corruption and Other Losses Prevention and Management
- Conflict of Interest
- Health, Safety and Wellbeing
- Freedom of Information
- Risk Management
- Information Security
- Workplace Behaviour

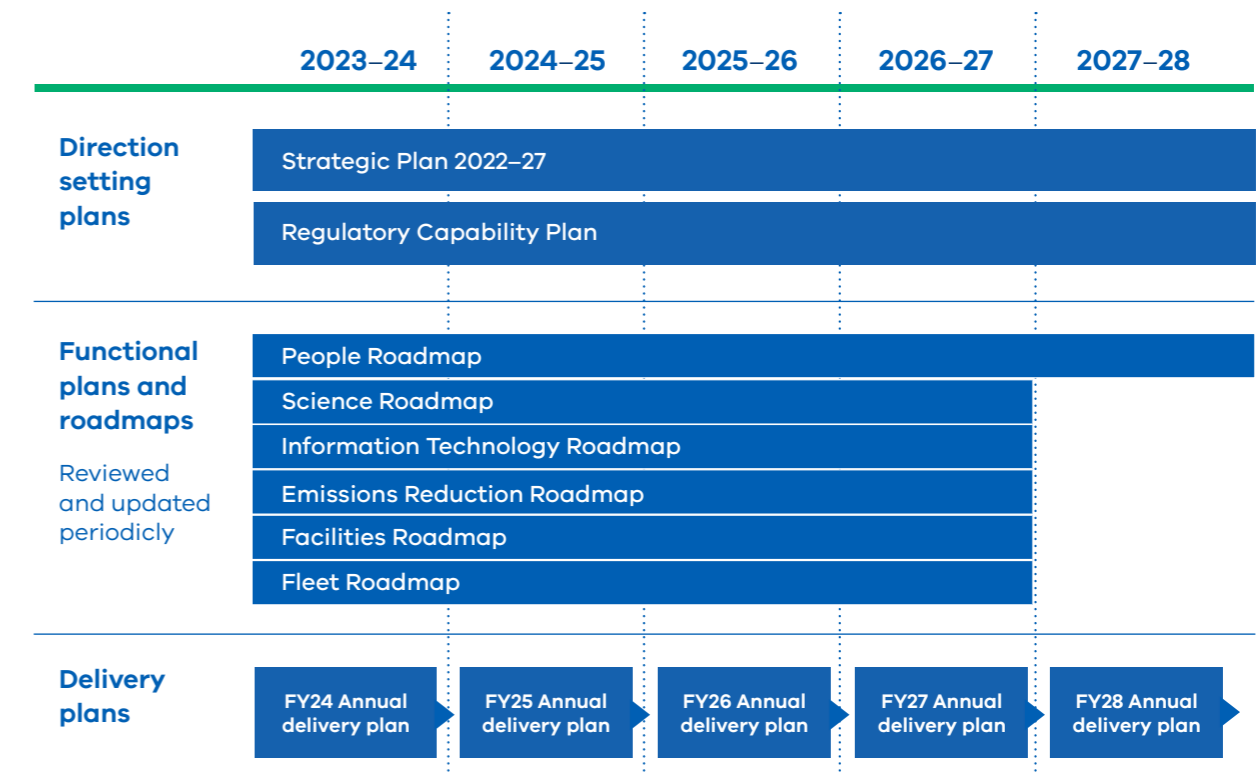
Planning

Our annual delivery plan communicates the objectives, projects and services to be achieved within a financial year, aligned to our Strategic Plan 2022–27 and our Regulatory Capability Plan, which defines our strategic approach to regulatory capability uplift across the organisation.

Our annual delivery plan draws on multi-year functional plans and roadmaps for key enablers of regulatory and organisational excellence – including science, information technology, and our workforce.



Our planning framework



It's important for us to maintain an aspiring document that sets out our convictions and targets. This work allows us to implement actions to reduce our environmental impact.

Shaun Rooks
Senior Environment Protection Officer



Risk management

Our Risk and Audit Committee (RAC) exercises strong oversight of EPA’s risk management, including through internal and external audits. The Financial Management Act 1994 requires EPA to comply with the Victorian Government Risk Management Framework (VGRMF) and we have systematically embedded risk management in annual planning and operational delivery. We are committed to a positive risk culture.

We have identified organisational strategic risks that could impact the achievement of our strategic outcomes and have established treatment plans to mitigate these risks. Management of organisational strategic risks is regularly monitored and reviewed by SEC.

Outcomes of this monitoring and review are reported to the RAC and the Governing Board biannually or as required. Operational risks are identified and managed through division and branch annual delivery plans.

EPA has also established an effective internal audit function, providing independent and objective assurance in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing. EPA’s Internal Auditor is appointed by RAC and evaluates compliance and performance of risk management, internal control, governance and operational delivery.

I’m excited about our dedication to mitigate our impacts on climate change. It’s critical we reduce our environmental footprint to ensure we’re preventing harm for generations to come.

Sophie Gosch
Project Officer / President of Green Stars



Climate-related risks

EPA’s Governing Board has a duty of care, diligence and skill with respect to climate-related risk under the Public Administration Act 2004 and is taking action to meet that duty.

We are updating our governance structures, policies, processes and other documentation to ensure climate change is fully considered and integrated into our decision-making processes. Our Governing Board Charter, as well as relevant committee charters, will be reviewed in 2024 to ensure they capture our climate-related risk responsibilities.

As a priority, our Governing Board will lead an assessment of climate-related risks and opportunities in alignment with the International Sustainability Standards Board’s IFRS S2 Climate-related Disclosures Standard. This standard integrates and builds on the recommendations of the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures while incorporating relevant disclosure requirements for our organisation.

Each year, our Governing Board, supported by RAC, will report, and disclose on the management of our climate-related risk and opportunities within our annual report of operations.



Appointments and delegations

Appointments and delegations are key elements of our organisational governance, ensuring decisions are made by people with the right skills, experience and legal authority.

Appointment to a statutory role confers legal powers on a person so they may exercise responsibilities in their own right. EPA appointments include Authorised Officers, people who may take proceedings, analysts and litter enforcement officers.

A delegation is the granting of legal power by an appointee to another person or body. Delegations include both regulatory powers and administrative functions, for example human resource and financial management powers. All EPA delegations and appointments are made by the Governing Board or Chief Executive Officer.

When staff make decisions in a statutory role or as a delegate, they do so transparently according to legislation and for the proper purpose. Our staff apply their experience and knowledge – and draw on others’ – without bias and with appropriate reference to policy and relevant information. This reflects our role as an independent regulator.



Community engagement and public participation

EPA’s community engagement approach is focused on engaging early, often, and respectfully with those affected by our decisions, seeking to understand their aspirations and concerns.

Our decisions are based on the best available science and the legislative requirements that govern us. We explain the reasons for the decisions we make to those affected by them.

EPA’s Charter of Consultation outlines how EPA provides opportunities for the community to be involved in decisions about environmental protection. We seek to make the community aware of relevant matters and proposals and provide suitable opportunities for public participation in decision making.

EPA uses a wide range of channels to connect and share information with community, business and other stakeholders. These channels include our website, social media, traditional media, contact centre and well as face-to-face engagement.

We have established a series of formal consultation groups across a wide range of industry sectors. To strengthen place-based participation, we put in place community forums in each of our 7 regions to discuss statewide and local issues.

We make sure we engage in a way that works best for our diverse audiences, giving people context and information they need to make an informed contribution to environmental protection and take action to protect their health.



We should be the industry leaders in reducing our own waste and contributing to the circular economy. We need to be held accountable as waste generators and adopters of sustainable practices.

Jeremy Cheong
Solicitor – Advice



Human rights

We have obligations to act compatibly with and consider human rights identified in the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 when making decisions.

This charter is a Victorian law that protects the human rights of people in Victoria, establishing a human rights framework that fosters a commitment to human rights culture within government by placing obligations on the exercise of executive power by Victorian public authorities, including EPA.




The charter protects 20 human rights. The most, relevant to EPA's regulatory decision-making are:



Protection of families and children



Recognition and equality before the law



Right to life



Privacy and reputation




Right to take part in public life



Protection of cultural rights



Property rights



A fair hearing

Modern slavery

EPA's Modern Slavery Policy was made in line with the Commonwealth Modern Slavery Act 2018. We have committed ongoing responsibility to identify and take action against modern slavery risks to maintain a responsible and transparent supply chain.

As part of our efforts to minimise risks of modern slavery, we ensure the goods and services procured through our supply and value chains and operations meet with EPA and Victorian Government policies. We work closely with our suppliers to assess risks within our supply chains.

Social procurement and local jobs first

EPA is committed to ethical, sustainable, and socially responsible procurement, and we expect the same high standards of our suppliers.

The Victorian Government Supplier Code of Conduct describes the minimum expectations of suppliers in the areas of integrity, ethics and conduct, conflict of interest, gifts, benefits and hospitality, corporate governance, labour and human rights, health and safety, and environmental management.

Through its buying power, EPA has significant ability to generate additional social value beyond the value of the goods and services it uses.



EPA is also committed to using its purchasing power to help develop local industries, create jobs and boost economic activity across Victoria.

EPA supports Victorian businesses and workers by ensuring small and medium enterprises are given full and fair opportunity to bid for all contracts.

EPA applies the Local Jobs First Policy in all projects valued at \$3 million or more in metropolitan Melbourne for statewide projects, or \$1 million or more for projects in regional Victoria.

EPA, together with other Victorian government agencies, seeks to achieve the Victorian Government's social and sustainable procurement objectives of:



Opportunities for Victorians with a disability



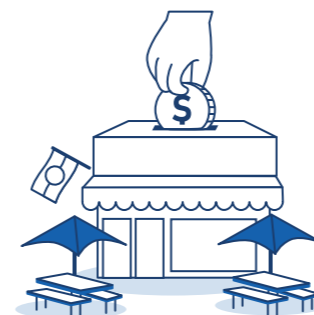
Women's equality and safety



Opportunities for Victorian priority jobseekers



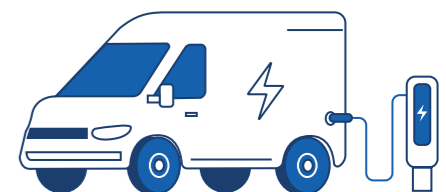
Safe and fair workplaces



Support for Victorian social enterprise and Aboriginal business sectors



Opportunities for Victorian Aboriginal people



Environmentally sustainable outputs



Support for sustainable Victorian regions



Environmentally sustainable business practices



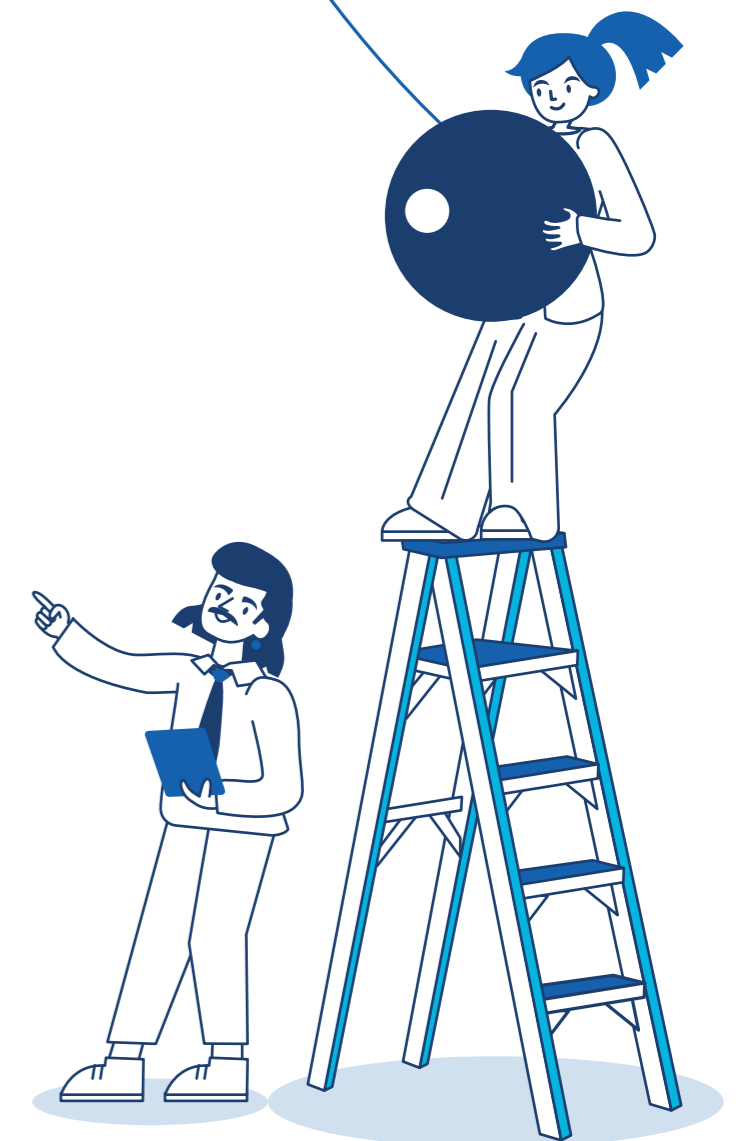
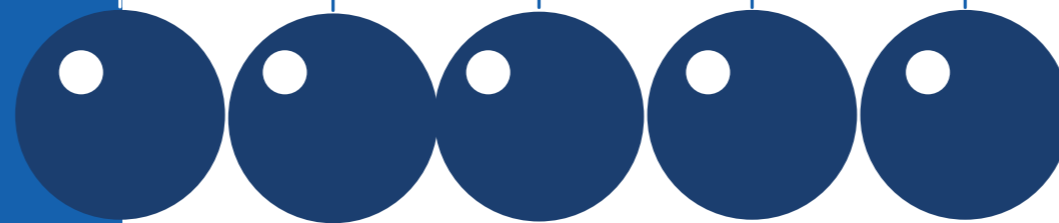
Implementation of the Victorian Government's Climate Change Policy objectives

Measuring our impact

EPA is committed to achieving the targets we have set for ourselves in this ESG Statement. We will report on our progress against each target in our annual report of operations from 2024 onwards.

To enable us to measure progress, we have set KPIs and supporting metrics for each commitment. These indicators and measures are incorporated into our organisational monitoring, evaluation, reporting, and improvement (MERI) framework, driving performance and continuous improvement against our commitments. Our MERI framework ensures we are accountable and achieve our objectives.

Our ESG priorities are reviewed annually to ensure they address changes in our operating environment and risk profile.



Further information and accessibility

Contact us if you need this information in an accessible format such as large print or audio.

Please telephone 1300 372 842 or email contact@epa.vic.gov.au.

Interpreter assistance

If you need interpreter assistance or want this document translated, please call 131 450 and advise your preferred language.

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