

## Policy context

The vision, principles and strategies described in this strategy paper are built on a number of current social and health policies that are briefly summarised below.

### Growing Victoria Together and A Fairer Victoria

*Growing Victoria Together* commits the Government to the provision of high-quality, accessible health and community services. This will lead to improvements in the health of Victorians, improvement in the wellbeing of young children, reduced emergency, elective and dental waiting times and increased consumer confidence in health and community services.

*A Fairer Victoria*, the Government's social policy statement, establishes a framework to address disadvantage by developing and implementing innovative approaches to service delivery. The guiding elements of this framework are:

- ensuring that universal services provide equal opportunity for all
- reducing barriers to opportunity
- strengthening assistance to disadvantaged groups
- providing targeted support to the highest-risk areas
- involving communities in decisions affecting their lives
- making it easier to work with Government.

### National Oral Health Plan 2004–2013

In July 2004, Australia's Health Ministers endorsed the *National Oral Health Plan 2004–2013* (AHMC 2004b). Four broad themes underpin the plan:

- Recognition that **oral health is an integral part of general health**
- A **population health approach**, with a strong focus on promoting health and the prevention and early identification of oral disease
- **Access** to appropriate and affordable services – health promotion, prevention, early intervention and treatment – for all Australians
- **Education** to achieve a sufficient and appropriately skilled workforce, and communities that effectively support and promote oral health.

The National Oral Health Plan identified the importance of reducing the major disparities that exist in oral health status and in access to oral health care. In a submission to the Senate Select Committee on Medicare (2003), Professor Andrew Wilson described the link between economic status and oral health: 'This is a condition which is probably, of all the conditions in Australia, the most strongly socioeconomically related. The people who have the worst oral health are the most disadvantaged in the community ... there is a large amount of dental disease in the community, and we need a strategy to deal with it.'

## Care in your community

*Care in your community* is the Victorian Government's framework for a consistent approach to the development of a health care system that is integrated and coordinated around the needs of people, rather than around service types, professional boundaries, organisational structure, funding or reporting requirements (DHS 2006a).

It adopts the principles set out in *Victoria: a better state of health*, which are further underpinned by a number of specific values that inform the development of the Victorian health care system. These are:

- The best place to treat
- Together we do better
- Technology to benefit people
- A better health care experience
- A better place to work.

*Care in your community* will refocus planning and investment to ensure the best mix of inpatient and community-based integrated care services. It will respond to the need for prevention, early intervention, self-management and health promotion.

Planning and investment for the delivery of integrated, community-based health care will be:

- based on a single set of area-based planning catchments
- informed by a single set of planning principles
- supported by area-based planning networks
- focused on three high-level areas of need
- conducted on the basis of defined modes, settings and levels of care.

## Other relevant policies and strategies

Other policies and strategies that are relevant to the development of public dental health care in Victoria include:

- Dental Health Services Victoria *Oral Health Strategic Plan and Service Plan 2005–2010*
- The *Primary Care Partnership Strategy*, which provides the partnership arrangements among local primary health care providers, including dental health providers
- The *Community Health Services Policy*, which provides the strategic directions for Victoria's network of Community Health Services, many of whom are public dental providers
- The *Metropolitan Health Strategy*, which provides direction for the delivery of health services in Melbourne
- *Rural directions for a better state of health*, which describes the directions for development of public rural health services in Victoria.