

Victorian alcohol and other drugs strategy: summary

2025 – 2035



To receive this document in another format email the [Alcohol and other drugs policy team](mailto:aod.policy@health.vic.gov.au) <aod.policy@health.vic.gov.au>.

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Except where otherwise indicated, the images in this document show models and illustrative settings only, and do not necessarily depict actual services, facilities or recipients of services.

In this document, 'Aboriginal' refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. 'Indigenous' is retained when part of the title of a report, program or quotation.

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Available at www.health.vic.gov.au/alcohol-other-drugs/victorian-aod-strategy <<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/alcohol-other-drugs/victorian-aod-strategy>>

If you or a person you support needs help

- DirectLine is a statewide telephone and online service that supports people seeking AOD information, support or referral. DirectLine operates 24/7.
 - [DirectLine](https://www.directline.org.au/)
<<https://www.directline.org.au/>>
 - 1800 888 236
- Youth drug and alcohol advice (YoDAA) is Victoria's AOD information, advice and referral phone line. YoDAA is available Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm.
 - [YoDAA](https://yodaa.org.au/) <<https://yodaa.org.au/>>
 - 1800 458 685
- Rainbow Door is a free specialist LGBTIQ+ helpline. Experienced peers provide information, support and referral to LGBTIQ+ people, their friends and their families.
 - [Rainbow Door](https://www.switchboard.org.au/rainbow-door)
<<https://www.switchboard.org.au/rainbow-door>>
 - 1800 729 367
- Yarning Safe N Strong (YSNS) is a free and confidential counselling service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Established by the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, YSNS is available 24/7 to people and families who need to have a yarn with someone about their wellbeing.
 - [Yarning Safe N Strong](https://www.vahs.org.au/yarning-safe-n-strong-media/)
<<https://www.vahs.org.au/yarning-safe-n-strong-media/>>
 - 1800 959 563
- Family Drug and Gambling Help offers confidential support and referral for people impacted by someone's alcohol and drug use and/or gambling. The phonenumber operates 24/7.
 - [Family Drug and Gambling Help](https://www.sharc.org.au/sharc-programs/family-drug-gambling-help/)
<<https://www.sharc.org.au/sharc-programs/family-drug-gambling-help/>>
 - 1300 660 068





A strategy for alcohol and other drugs in Victoria

People use substances (alcohol and other drugs) for different reasons.

Many people do not use substances frequently, and many people who use substances do not experience harm. There are signs that rates of substance-related harms are increasing, even though overall use in the population has stayed fairly stable.

Parts of our community are at greater risk of alcohol and other drug (AOD)-related harms. Some groups also experience barriers in accessing the AOD service and support system.

The Victorian Government committed to developing the *Victorian alcohol and other drugs strategy 2025–2035* (the strategy) as part of its *Statewide Action Plan to save lives and reduce drug harms* in 2024.

The strategy aims to address AOD-related harms in the community over the long term by ensuring Victorians can access the right information, support and care at the right time.

Stigmatising substance use simply causes more harm. The strategy will deliver a health-focused approach to substance use that responds to individual needs. It will guide government investment and policy direction

to ensure AOD services, treatment and supports are available, accessible and responsive to people's needs and are available through multiple entry points.

Our strategy

Vision

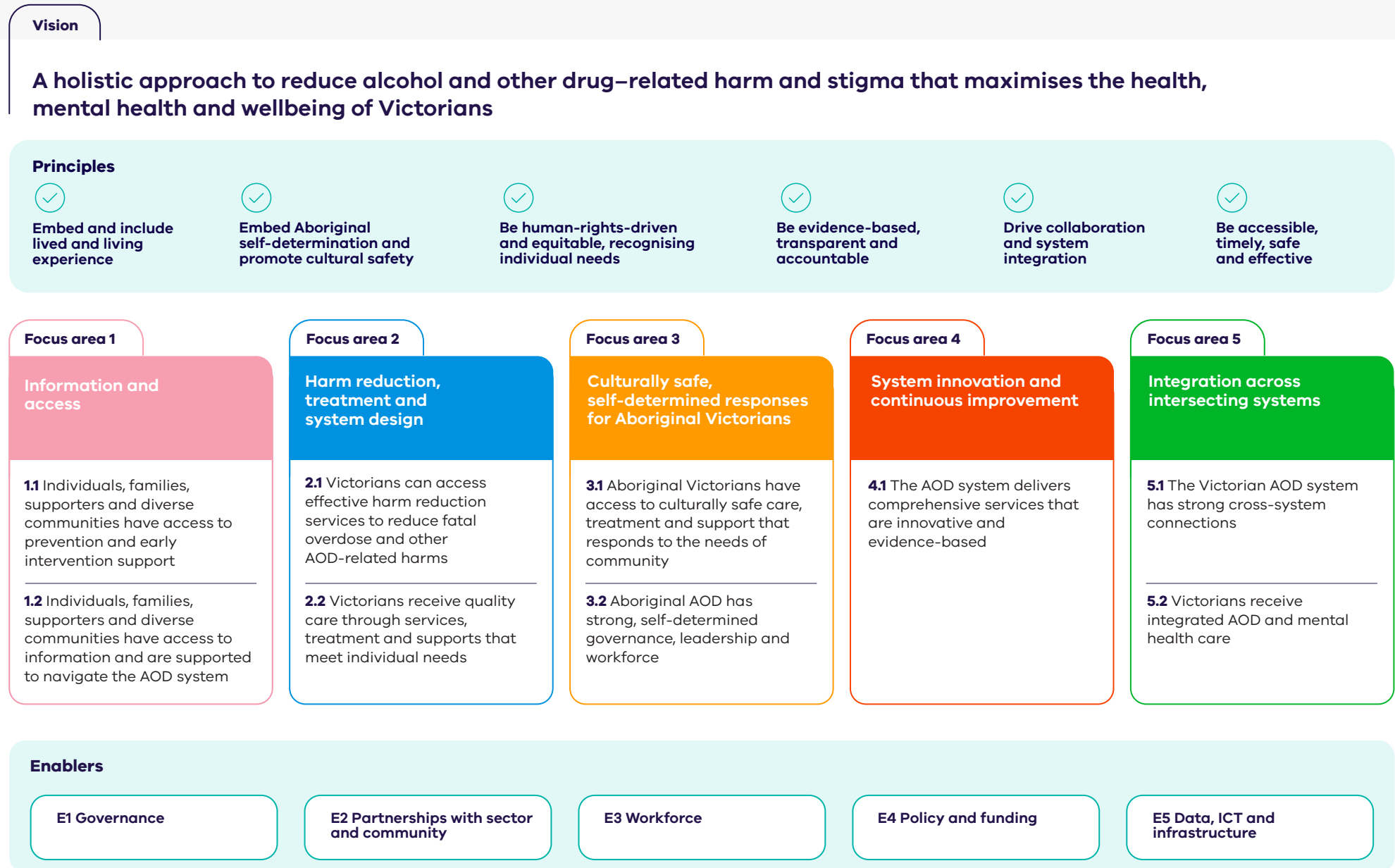
A holistic approach to reduce alcohol and other drug-related harms and stigma that maximises the health, mental health and wellbeing of Victorians.

Informed by sector and community engagement, we will know we've achieved our vision when:

- individuals, families and communities can access the support they want, when and where they need it
- services deliver quality care and support that responds to individual needs
- as individuals, Victorians experience holistic care in a coordinated AOD system that has strong connections to intersecting services and systems
- Victorians experience a reduction in AOD-related harms and stigma, and they experience better health, mental health and wellbeing
- Victorian prevention and early intervention strategies contribute to a reduction in AOD-related disease, disability and death
- all Victorians, regardless of their cultural background, sexuality, gender or ability, have an equitable experience and equal opportunity to attain positive outcomes.



Figure 1: AOD strategy overview



Focus areas, objectives and actions

The following focus areas, objectives and actions outline the work we will do to achieve the vision.

Focus area 1

Information and access

1.1 Individuals, families, supporters and diverse communities have access to prevention and early intervention support

1.1.1 Establish a prevention framework and partnerships to focus on preventing AOD-related harm.

1.1.2 Strengthen education about, identification of, and responses to potential AOD harm.

1.1.3 Increase health promotion efforts so all Victorians have the information they need about substance use.

1.2 Individuals, families, supporters and diverse communities have access to information and are supported to navigate the AOD system

1.2.1 Improve access to information, support and advice through a central information point for all Victorians.

1.2.2 Improve access to accurate and up-to-date harm reduction information.

1.2.3 Review and strengthen entry points into the AOD system to ensure timely access and support in metropolitan, regional and rural communities.

1.2.4 Embed new supports to improve service navigation within and across systems for an improved consumer experience.

1.2.5 Strengthen access to the pharmacotherapy system to enable consistent, timely and quality treatment.

Focus area 2

Harm reduction, treatment and system design

2.1 Victorians can access effective harm reduction services to reduce fatal overdose and other AOD-related harms

2.1.1 Deliver the *Statewide Action Plan* with a focus on reducing AOD-related harms.

2.1.2 Strengthen and target harm reduction initiatives to respond to the needs of diverse communities.

2.1.3 Strengthen Victoria's early warning system to identify changes in drug markets and trends, enabling timely public health advice and appropriate system responses.

2.1.4 Continue to expand proactive overdose prevention and response initiatives, including peer-based initiatives.

2.2 Victorians receive quality care through services, treatment and supports that meet individual needs

2.2.1 Review and enhance the AOD system to ensure it continues to address the needs of the Victorian community and provides person-centred continuity of care.

2.2.2 Embed post-intervention services as core elements of AOD services and supports.

2.2.3 Strengthen the clinical governance framework for AOD to promote quality care, consistent practice and positive outcomes.

2.2.4 Strengthen the capacity of the AOD services and supports to deliver services that meet wide range of diverse community needs.

2.2.5 Ensure age-appropriate supports are available across the lifespan, and review and strengthen the youth AOD service system.

Focus areas, objectives and actions (continued)

Focus area 3

Culturally safe, self-determined responses for Aboriginal Victorians

3.1 Aboriginal Victorians have access to culturally safe care, treatment and support that responds to the needs of community

3.1.1 Develop an Aboriginal AOD implementation action plan to prioritise AOD needs in line with other health and wellbeing needs.

3.1.2 Deliver on AOD-specific actions from the *Aboriginal health and wellbeing partnership agreement action plan*.

3.1.3 Deliver Aboriginal community-controlled harm reduction initiatives.

3.1.4 Aboriginal communities to self-determine, co-design and deliver community-specific, peer-led AOD prevention, services and support initiatives.

3.1.5 Ensure mainstream AOD services and supports are accessible and culturally safe for Aboriginal communities.

3.2 Aboriginal AOD has strong, self-determined governance, leadership and workforce

3.2.1 Strengthen and empower the Aboriginal AOD workforce, including developing a future workforce and strengthening cultural supports.

3.2.2 Strengthen Victorian Government support for and engagement with Aboriginal leadership and autonomous decision-making in the context of AOD governance.

3.2.3 Advance self-determined stewardship of Aboriginal AOD services.

3.2.4 Enable data sovereignty for Aboriginal Victorians.

Focus area 4

System innovation and continuous improvement

4.1 The AOD system delivers comprehensive services that are innovative and evidence-based

4.1.1 Create opportunities for innovation in AOD services and supports.

4.1.2 Embed evaluation as a key part of service delivery to support continuous improvement and build an evidence base.

4.1.3 Develop an evolving research agenda that informs best practice and an AOD system that meets the needs of all Victorians.

4.1.4 Develop an outcomes framework that enables monitoring of outcomes and performance across programs, services and supports.

4.1.5 Seek expert, evidence-based advice including from those with lived and living experience to build innovative practical solutions to stigma and its impact on equitable and effective services, treatment and supports.





Focus areas, objectives and actions (continued)

Focus area 5

Integration across intersecting systems

5.1 The Victorian AOD system has strong cross-system connections

- 5.1.1** Improve cross-system interfaces to holistically address consumer needs.

- 5.1.2** Strengthen the role of primary care providers in the AOD system. This includes advocating to the Commonwealth to improve support for complex care through the Medicare Benefits Schedule.

- 5.1.3** Improve pathways and specialist AOD services for people involved with, or at risk of involvement with, the justice system.

- 5.1.4** Build on partnerships with Victoria Police and the Department of Justice and Community Safety to continue to develop evidence-based diversion programs.

- 5.1.5** Explore opportunities for Victorian public hospitals and community-based health providers to deliver harm reduction initiatives. This includes brief intervention and treatment services and direct referrals into the AOD system.

5.2 Victorians receive integrated AOD and mental health care

- 5.2.1** Develop and monitor measures for integrated care.

- 5.2.2** Improve integrated care capability across systems through existing statewide services. This will deliver opportunities for cross-system collaboration, workforce development and expert clinical guidance.

- 5.2.3** Evaluate integrated care initiatives to identify and share opportunities for improvement.

Implementation

Implementing the strategy will involve planning and designing specific initiatives aligned with the actions. These will be subject to future decisions, including financial decisions, by government.

Our approach to system development and reform will be staged and progressive, building on a strong foundation to be created during early implementation.

We will also consider evolving demographics, trends and evidence. We want to ensure our work remains relevant and adaptable to future needs.

We will continue to work with the sector, community groups and consumers, families and supporters to deliver the strategy's actions and objectives.

We will ensure initiatives are delivered in line with government policies and programs (state and Commonwealth).

We will implement the strategy over 3 phases, called horizons.

Horizon 1:

2025 to 2028

Focus on setting strong foundations for future improvement opportunities. This will involve strengthening existing AOD services and support, delivering on existing commitments and identifying opportunities for future actions.

Horizon 2:

2028 to 2031

Continue to build our evidence base. We will develop tools and resources to support service monitoring, evaluation and outcomes reporting.

Horizon 3:

2031 onwards

From 2031, we will continue to sustain and evolve efforts from this strategy. We will work towards an innovative and continuously learning AOD system.

Horizon 1 (2025 to 2028)

In the initial years of the strategy, we will focus on setting strong foundations for future improvement opportunities. This will involve strengthening existing AOD services and support, delivering on current commitments and identifying opportunities for future actions.

In horizon 1 we will:

- improve information and access to services
- reduce overdose through targeted initiatives, including strengthening Victoria's early warning system
- continue to implement initiatives from the *Statewide Action Plan*
- review AOD service models as a basis to reform funding models, to create sustainable, accessible and effective services
- build contemporary models that can respond to current and emerging patterns of AOD use as well as concurrent mental health and AOD services, treatment and care
- create more choices for people seeking access to services
- address actions from the Aboriginal health and wellbeing partnership agreement action plan
- develop self-determined strategic directions for Aboriginal Victorians
- prioritise workforce support, capability and planning
- strengthen governance, system leadership and cross-government strategic partnerships
- identify opportunities for future actions for funding, policy development and data system improvements.

Horizon 2 (2028 to 2031)

In horizon 2, we will:

- continue to build our evidence base
- develop tools and resources to support service monitoring, evaluation and outcomes reporting
- continue to implement funding and service model improvements
- strengthen the AOD system and create more options for people seeking support and care
- implement data-sharing and reporting solutions
- collaborate and build partnerships that strengthen cross-system connections with broader health and social systems.

Horizon 3 (2031 onwards)

From 2031 we will:

- continue to sustain and evolve efforts from this strategy
- work towards an innovative and continuous learning AOD system.

We will also determine actions to implement in this phase during horizons 1 and 2.

Monitoring and accountability mechanisms will be implemented to ensure we are tracking our progress, including clear, measurable milestones and outcomes across the life of the strategy.

