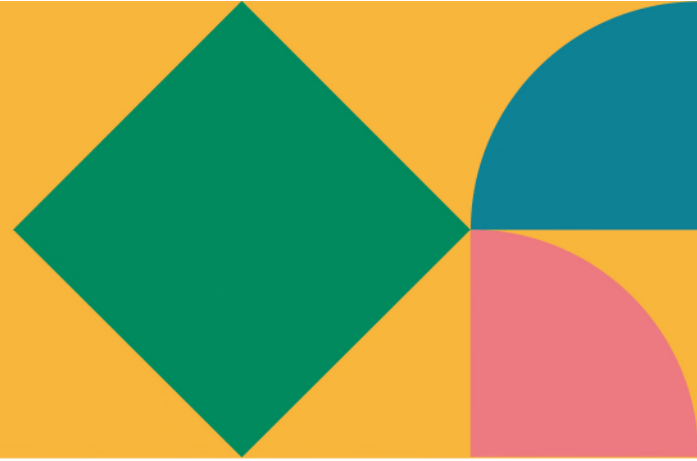


# New Homelessness Services Guidelines 2024 and Activity alignment

## Fact sheet and FAQs



## Background and Context

In 2020, the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) released the report, *Victoria's Homelessness Response* in which they made thirteen recommendations to the then Department of Health and Human Services. All the recommendations were accepted. Recommendation 2 and 5 are required to be acquitted upon and are the basis of the Activity alignment and update to the *Homelessness Services Guidelines and Conditions of Funding May 2014* (2014 Guidelines).

The 2014 Guidelines are no longer fit-for-purpose, as the sector landscape has evolved over the past ten years. The increasing number of individuals experiencing homelessness and the growing complexity of their needs demand a more nuanced and adaptable service approach.

The relevant homelessness activity descriptions (activities) have also not been reviewed in over a decade and are not fit-for-purpose, are duplicative, and commitment level information contains anomalies and inaccuracies.

The guidelines update and activity alignment projects will run alongside each other as two streams of work. The purpose of these changes is to modernise and improve the way in which services are contracted under the service agreement, including making activities and associated guidelines streamlined, simple, transparent and contemporary.

## What are the key features and benefits of these changes?

- There will be no change to funding for any organisation under the Service Agreement as a result of these changes.
- The 2014 Guidelines will be replaced with new *Homelessness Services Guidelines 2024*. The updated guidelines will cover the broad sector approach to service delivery. Guidelines for specific programs will be contained in separate documents, to enable future updates as required.
- The content changes will reflect legislative reforms, policy directions and cultural appropriateness in a streamlined structure.
- An online interactive format of the *Homelessness Service Guidelines 2024* will be made available in addition to a hard copy version.
- Activities will be streamlined, simplified, updated, and will outline clear and transparent expectations aligned to the updated guidelines. This means that some activities will be made redundant while new ones will be created including a proposed Aboriginal client support activity.
- Performance measures and counting rules for most activities will remain largely the same. However, some new and changed performance measures will be added where it is practical and where it makes performance reporting meaningful and less burdensome.
- Commitments will be aligned to the correct activity. For example, youth refuge service delivery will be aligned to a new Youth Refuge activity. Commitment event descriptions will be updated where they are old and redundant.
- Targets will remain largely the same with any change to be negotiated and agreed with agencies.

## Why are the 2014 Guidelines being reviewed?

Significant policy and legislative changes have occurred since 2014. A thorough review of the 2014 Guidelines is crucial to address these challenges to ensure contemporary service delivery and comply with VAGO 2020 recommendations. The revised guidelines will be aligned with the updated activity structure.

## Will agencies be expected to change the way they deliver services?

Agencies are not expected to change the way they deliver services because of this change. The purpose of this change is to modernise oversight of specialist homelessness services, within current policy settings. The activity alignment and guidelines update will help to build the foundations of further system improvements, but will not result in sweeping changes to targets, service guidelines and funding.

## Will agencies receive a change to their contracted volume?

The change will not result in overarching changes to agencies' contracted volume. Some minor changes will be proposed where a performance measure is changing or otherwise by negotiation with the agency.

## What are the next steps that the sector can expect as it relates to homelessness reform?

Victoria's reform of the specialist homelessness services sector is a continuous process, with the latest phase of system improvements involving a range of smaller scale changes since the *Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Plan* was released. The government will continue to collaborate with the sector, including through the newly established Ministerial Homelessness Reform Advisory Group, on further system improvements and activities over 2024 and 2025.

## How will Homes Victoria consult with key stakeholders?

- Homes Victoria has met with the Council for Homeless Persons who will facilitate an approach to broader sector communications and consultation. It is expected that this will include holding separate online information sessions to outline the *Homelessness Service Guidelines 2024* project separately from the activity alignment with communications provided alongside these sessions.
- Formal notification under the Service Agreement for all agencies receiving homelessness funding will be broadcast via Funded Agency Channel (FAC) and individual agency provider impact statements will be emailed directly to agencies.
- Draft guidelines will be shared online for feedback.
- An online survey will be provided to identify gaps and strengths of the draft *Homelessness Service Guidelines 2024*.
- Local Area Service Networks (LASNs) can request a representative from Homes Victoria to attend a LASN meeting to provide further information and/or collate the LASN feedback.

## What is the governance structure to oversee guideline development and the activity alignment?

Internal stakeholders across the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) and Homes Victoria will form a project Working Group to provide a critical eye across *the Homelessness Services Guidelines 2024* and activity alignment projects. The Working Group will have diverse expertise and an understanding of the homelessness service sector and delivery of homelessness services.

## What are the anticipated key project milestones?

Milestone	Anticipated timeline
<b>Homelessness Guidelines 2024</b>	
Desktop analysis and planning	January 2024
Establishment of internal working group to oversee the Guidelines project	February 2024
Key stakeholder communication	March 2024
Incorporate feedback from key stakeholders	March – June 2024
Go live (post 20-day notice period)	September – October 2024 (anticipated date)
<b>Activity alignment 2024</b>	
Engagement with the sector on proposed activity structure	February to March 2024
Formal notification including final activity structure and remapping of activities and commitments for each organisation	31 March 2024
Implementation discussions and negotiation of any required changes to remapping	April to June
Go live	1 July 2024