



Annual Report 2024-25

Supporting the safe delivery
of social services



Accountable Officer's declaration



12 September 2025

The Hon. Lizzie Blandthorn
Minister for Children and Disability
50 Lonsdale Street
Naarm/Melbourne VIC 3000

Dear Minister Blandthorn,

I am pleased to present the 2024–25 Social Services Regulator (SSR) annual report in accordance with the requirements of the *Financial Management Act 1994* (Vic) and the *Social Services Regulation Act 2021* (Vic).

The report provides a review of the activities and outcomes of the SSR in performing its functions and powers for the year ending 30 June 2025 and has been prepared in accordance with relevant legislation and reporting guidelines.

It also includes an update on the SSR's progress in relation to the Statement of Expectations you provided on 22 October 2024.

I trust this report will be of assistance in informing Parliament, social service providers, service users, stakeholders and the community about the SSR's work and outcomes during the reporting period.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Kaplan'.

Jonathan Kaplan
Social Services Regulator

Acknowledgement of Country

The Social Services Regulator (SSR) acknowledges and celebrates Aboriginal people as the First Peoples, Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land and water on which we operate.

We acknowledge and respect that Aboriginal communities are steeped in traditions and customs built on a disciplined social and cultural order that has sustained 60,000 years of existence.

We recognise the deep and enduring connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Country, and their continuing custodianship of the land, waterways and seas.

The SSR plays a role in ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service users receive culturally safe and self-determined service provision from all social services in Victoria.

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This document is available in accessible formats on our website.

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Definitions

Acronym or word	Definition
The Act	<i>Social Services Regulation Act 2021</i> (Vic)
ACCO	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
CCYP	Commission for Children and Young People
CSS	Child Safe Standards
DSC	Disability Services Commissioner
DFFH	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
Duty holders	Service providers
Existing service provider	Service providers registered with the previous Human Services Regulator
FOI	Freedom of information
FRD	Financial reporting directions
FTE	Full-time equivalent
HSR	Human Services Regulator
IBAC	Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission
ICT	Information and communication technology
OH&S	Occupational health and safety
Out-of-home care	Temporary living arrangements for children and young people who cannot live with their families

Acronym or word	Definition
OVIC	Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner
The Regulator	Refers to the role of the office holder, Social Services Regulator (during the reporting period, Jonathan Kaplan)
The scheme or the new regulatory scheme	A consistent set of requirements for social service providers as provided for by the <i>Social Services Regulation Act 2021</i>
Secure Care	Secure Care Services is a specialist state-wide service operated by DFFH for children and young people aged 10 –17 years who are subject to a child protection intervention and who have been assessed as being at substantial and immediate risk of harm.
SRS	Supported residential service
SSR	Social Services Regulator, referring to the independent statutory body
SSS	Social Services Standards
Suitability Panel	An independent panel which decides whether an out-of-home carer should be disqualified from providing care to children and whether an out-of-home carer's disqualification can be removed.
TRP	Total remuneration package
VCAT	Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal
VDWC	Victorian Disability Worker Commission
VGPB	Victorian Government Purchasing Board
VPS	Victorian Public Service
WCES	Worker and Carer Exclusion Scheme
WCES Panel	An independent panel which decides whether a WCES worker or carer is to be excluded from providing a WCES service (or a specified class of WCES services) as well as whether a WCES worker or carer's exclusion can be revoked.
WCES service user	A child or young person accessing WCES services, or a person with the characteristics of a WCES service user, such as an adult accessing WCES services

Legislation

Legislation referenced in this report
<i>Social Services Regulation Act 2021</i> (Vic) (the Act)
<i>Freedom of Information Act 1982</i> (Vic) (FOI Act)
<i>Building Act 1993</i> (Vic)
<i>Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012</i> (Vic)
<i>Carers Recognition Act 2012</i> (Vic)
<i>Disability Act 2006</i> (Vic)
<i>Local Jobs Act 2003</i> (Vic)
<i>Financial Management Act 1994</i> (Vic)
<i>Children, Youth and Families Act 2005</i> (Vic)

Section 1

About the Regulator

Message from the Regulator



Jonathan Kaplan

As Victoria's inaugural Social Services Regulator (the Regulator), I am pleased to present our first annual report.

The establishment of the Social Services Regulator (SSR) as an independent statutory body on 1 July 2024 is the result of the Victorian Government's commitment to ensuring that the diverse range of people accessing social services, including children, have stronger protections.

Our vision is that social services are safe and treat people with agency and dignity.

Our paramount consideration is the protection of service users.

During our first year of operation, we implemented the new regulatory scheme in consultation with the social services sector, and supported service providers to transition through guidance, engagement and a streamlined registration process.

We have done this while maintaining existing protections through our regulatory activity with service providers that automatically transitioned to the new scheme, including the Supported Residential Services (SRS) sector, and through regulating the Child Safe Standards (CSS) as an integrated regulator for the social services sector.

We have exercised new powers afforded to us in the *Social Services Regulation Act 2021* (Vic) (the Act), including issuing improvement notices to service providers. Our first year of operation saw the SSR undertake 184 compliance inspections with 77 service providers at 83 sites across Victoria.

Significant work has gone into transitioning to the Worker and Carer Exclusion Scheme (WCES), which came into effect alongside the establishment of the SSR on 1 July 2024. WCES allows interim exclusions to be issued, under which a worker or carer cannot work in the out-of-home-care sector covered by the scheme while the person's conduct is considered under an investigation and, if relevant, by an independent panel. This reduces risks of harm to children in the out-of-home-care sector. In 2024–25, three interim exclusions were issued.

Our work is informed by the perspectives and experiences of those who use, work in and support Victoria's social services sector. In our first year, we have built strong relationships with stakeholders and have established our Consultative Committee, First Nations Reference Group, and Service Provider Reference Group to ensure our work is grounded in the experiences of people using social services. We are also establishing our Lived Experience Reference Group in 2025–26.

The SSR is committed to embedding Aboriginal cultural safety as a core part of our regulatory approach and in the way we work.

We are working closely with our First Nations Reference Group and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders in the social services sector to hear their perspectives and experiences. This engagement will inform how we regulate Aboriginal cultural safety. I have also visited a range of Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and peak bodies throughout the year to spend time with leaders and hear their perspectives.

I value the opportunities I have had to visit regional and metropolitan service providers across Victoria. These visits strengthen our understanding of how they work, what they do and how people experience their services. As the Regulator, it is critical for me to stay connected to the varied, unique environments and communities that social services are delivered to across the state.

I have also valued our collaborative engagement with co-regulators, including the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP), the Victorian Disability Worker Commission (VDWC), the Office of the Disability Services Commissioner (DSC) and many others. This has been an essential part of working together to prevent avoidable harm and reduce regulatory burden, and our collaboration will continue into the future.

At the end of the 2024–25 reporting period, a survey of service providers validated our engagement efforts as an organisation, with an 88% satisfaction score. In addition to our direct engagement efforts, I would like to acknowledge the breadth of engagement activities our people have delivered, and thank our stakeholders for sharing their time, knowledge and commitment to supporting the safe delivery of social services in Victoria.

I acknowledge the commitment and expertise of our people, who have been working hard to establish the SSR. Whether it be through registering service providers, establishing our regulatory approach, monitoring compliance, undertaking inspections, or developing guidance to support service providers to transition, their dedication and commitment to SSR's purpose is inspiring.

Our focus over the next three years will be underpinned by our 2025–27 Strategic Plan, included in this report. This will be supported by the development of our Compliance Monitoring Plan, information sharing and collaboration with our co-regulators, as well as ongoing engagement with those who use or work in the social services and related sectors.

Yours sincerely,



Jonathan Kaplan
Social Services Regulator

Overview

The Social Services Regulator (SSR) is an independent statutory authority established under the *Social Services Regulation Act 2021* (the Act).

The SSR exists to ensure social service providers meet standards, to protect the rights of service users and prevent abuse or neglect in the delivery of social services.

Previously, social service providers were subject to different requirements under different laws. The new regulatory scheme establishes a consistent set of requirements for social service providers.

The main elements of the scheme are:



Registration – all in-scope providers must be registered with the SSR



Social Services Standards (SSS) – all registered providers must comply with the six standards



Child Safe Standards (CSS) – in-scope social services must comply with the 11 standards



Notifications – all registered providers have requirements to notify the Regulator about certain things, including notifications relating to the Worker and Carer Exclusion Scheme (WCES) to safeguard children and young people in out-of-home care

The Act establishes a new framework for social services regulation in Victoria. It began on 1 July 2024. The initiatives in the Act are:



Support the safe delivery of social services



Ensure social service providers understand their role in protecting the rights of social service users



Define roles and responsibilities of social service providers



Give the new regulator monitoring and enforcement powers, so it can respond to risks of harm



Improve information sharing between regulators so they can identify and respond to any risks of harm to service users

The new system means Victorian social service providers have:



Streamlined registration and reporting requirements



A common set of SSS



A dedicated regulator of the CSS for in-scope services



A single independent regulator

The standards and schemes we regulate

Social Services Standards

The SSS are a consistent set of obligations that social service providers in Victoria must meet.

Registered service providers need to demonstrate they provide safe social services by meeting the service requirements of the SSS.



1 Standard 1: Safe service delivery – Social services are safely provided based on assessed needs.

2 Standard 2: Service user agency and dignity – Social services are person-centred, and respect and uphold service user rights and agency.

3 Standard 3: Safe service environments – Social services are provided in a safe, secure and fit-for-purpose environment.

4 Standard 4: Feedback and complaints – Service users are supported to share feedback, complaints or concerns about service safety.

5 Standard 5: Accountable organisational governance – Effective governance and organisational systems support safe social service delivery.

6 Standard 6: Safe workforce – Social services are delivered by a workforce with the knowledge, capability and support to provide safe social services with care and skill.

Child Safe Standards

The CSS are an important part of Victoria's child-safeguarding landscape. Organisations providing services or facilities for children and young people, or engaging them as contractors, employees or volunteers, must comply with the requirements of the CSS, which are designed to make services safer for children and young people.

The SSR has sought to make social services safer for children and young people since becoming a regulator of the CSS, assuming this responsibility from the Secretary of the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) on 1 July 2024.

The SSR is an integrated sector regulator for the CSS, responsible for regulating the compliance of in-scope social service providers. As one of six CSS regulators in Victoria, we work closely with our co-regulators, including the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP).

In-scope social service providers need to demonstrate they meet the requirements of the CSS.

1 Standard 1: Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.

2 Standard 2: Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.

3 Standard 3: Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

4 Standard 4: Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.

5 Standard 5: Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.

6 Standard 6: People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.

7 Standard 7: Processes for complaints and concerns are child-focused.

8 Standard 8: Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.

9 Standard 9: Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.

10 Standard 10: Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.

11 Standard 11: Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

Worker and Carer Exclusion Scheme

WCES started on 1 July 2024 and is designed to address risks posed by individual workers and carers that require additional interventions.

WCES increases protections for children and young people in out-of-home care

WCES replaced the Victorian Carer Register scheme and increases protections for children and young people in out-of-home care by expanding the range of conduct that can result in a worker or carer being excluded from working.

Workers and carers covered by WCES include:

- foster carers
- workers or carers providing care and services to children in residential out-of-home-care services
- workers or carers providing care and services to children in Secure Care services.

Under WCES, conduct that can lead to exclusion includes:

- conduct that causes 'serious harm' to a WCES service user or a person with these characteristics, for example a child or young person
- repeated or persistent conduct that results in 'harm' to a WCES service user or a person with these characteristics.

Heads of WCES service providers must notify the SSR of serious incidents that result in serious harm or are reasonably likely to cause harm to children in out-of-home care. The Act also allows any person – for example, young people, parents or other members of the public – to disclose conduct to the SSR.

Harm is defined in the Act to include harm of a physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, financial or cultural nature.

Serious harm encompasses permanent or long-term:

- serious impairment
- serious disfigurement
- severe psychological injury or developmental delay.

It also includes death or loss of a foetus.

The following conduct committed against, with, or in the presence of a WCES service user or a person with these characteristics is also prescribed to be reported to the SSR:

- a sexual offence
- sexual misconduct
- physical violence
- any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm
- significant neglect.

WCES database

Before engaging a worker or carer for the first time, out-of-home-care service providers are required to check with the SSR if the person is on the excluded worker and carer database.

The database maintains the details of people who:

- have been excluded, including on an interim basis and
- are under investigation by the SSR.

Interim and permanently excluded workers' status is provided to the Working with Children Check scheme to determine if an individual is permitted to do child-related work in Victoria.

Our progress against the ministerial statement of expectation

The SSR received its inaugural Ministerial Statement of Expectation¹ (SOE) in October 2024. The SOE is a formal public statement made by the Minister for Children and Disability, the Hon. Lizzie Blandthorn, providing clear guidance on the government’s priorities and expectations of the role of the Regulator.

In line with the objectives set out under the Act, the Minister expects the SSR to protect the rights of service users, minimise risks of avoidable harm, as well as promote and support the delivery of safe and effective social services.

The SOE sets expectations in relation to our regulatory approach and emerging risks and priorities. Our progress against the SOE in our first year of operation is outlined in this section.

Regulatory approach

The SSR takes a graduated approach to regulating the SSS and the CSS. In the first year of operation, the SSR has:



Put in place a robust and streamlined registration process to bring existing service providers into the new scheme



Focused on informing and educating service providers about their obligations under both sets of standards



Taken regulatory action where there have been repeated failures, or where there is a significant risk to service users.

In 2024, the SSR published its regulatory approach statement to support service users, service providers and the community to understand how we regulate. The SSR has since implemented a regulatory approach that is transparent, accountable and centred on protecting the rights and safety of services users. Our regulatory approach is based on the following strategic and regulatory principles:



Collaborative:
To make sure social services are safe, we work with other relevant agencies including regulators, service funders (e.g. DFFH or the TAC), service users, registered social service providers, as well as the broader community.



Accountable:
We are objective and open in our decision making and processes. We help duty holders to understand our regulatory approach and focus areas.



Fair: We treat all social service providers equally, with procedural fairness, and without favouritism or prejudice.



Proportionate:
We make decisions using an intelligence-led and integrated approach that is proportionate to risk and minimises regulatory burden.



Effective: We use our resources where they will have the greatest positive effect and protect the safety, wellbeing and rights of people accessing social services.



Clear: We communicate our messages, advice and enforcement actions in a clear, accessible and concise way. We use communication channels that meet the needs of service users, providers and the community.



Inclusive: We engage with and consider the needs of the diverse stakeholders who access, provide and interact with the social services we regulate.

¹ Ministerial Statement of Expectation

Co-regulation of the Child Safe Standards

The SSR is an integrated sector regulator of the CSS for in-scope social services. The other regulators are:

- CCYP
- Department of Health
- Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority
- Department of Education (Quality Assurance and Regulation Division)
- Workforce Inspectorate Victoria (formerly Wage Inspectorate Victoria).

The SSR collaborates with co-regulators as a member of the Child Safe Standards Regulators' Senior Executive Group, which aims to maximise the effectiveness of the co-regulatory scheme in protecting children and young people from harm. The group is supported by a Child Safe Standards Regulators' Steering Group. The regulators rotate hosting the quarterly Co-regulator's Community of Practice, promoting consistent regulatory approaches to enforcing the CSS.

Guidance

Supporting service providers to transition to the new regulatory scheme and understand their obligations

The SSR has provided tailored guidance, education materials, information sessions and webinars to support service providers to transition to the new regulatory scheme and understand their obligations.

Throughout 2024–25, we hosted nine webinars that were attended by more than 800 stakeholders. These webinars supported service providers to understand the registration process, what requirements have changed, specific requirements for the supported SRS sector, and obligations for service providers in scope of WCES.

The SSR also collaborated with multiple peak bodies in the social services sector to build awareness of registration requirements and promote our guidance by presenting at their information sessions and meetings throughout the year. We also held eight feedback sessions with service providers to test guidance and incorporate feedback.



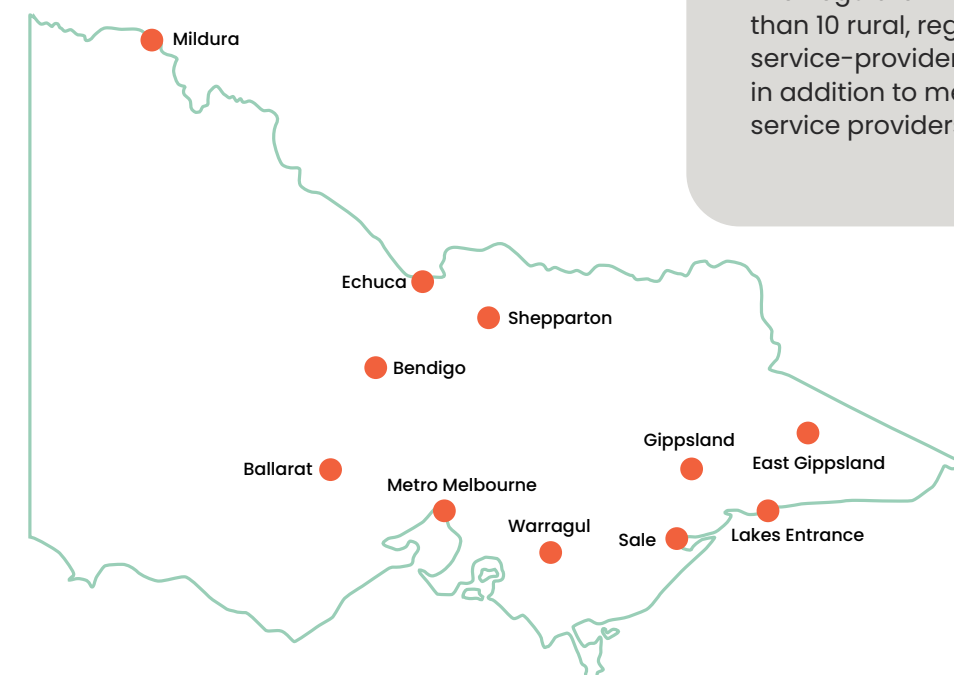
Guidance activities in 2024–25 included:

- Publishing seven fact sheets and two new web pages for the SRS sector
- A WCES fact sheet for out-of-home-care workers, foster carers and service providers
- Producing a tailored suite of materials, including a checklist and quick reference guides, to support disability service providers to register
- Preparing and publishing SSR-specific resources on the CSS including a fact sheet, self-assessment tool, easy-read documents and translated resources
- Providing resources and reminders to newly registered in-scope service providers of their obligations to comply with the CSS
- Maintaining a dedicated enquiry line and email inboxes for stakeholders seeking information and advice about the CSS, WCES, SSS, incident reporting and registration requirements
- Distributing information, including a quarterly bulletin, focused on the CSS and resources that entities can use to implement them, promoting evidence-based practice
- Creating a webpage for service providers, including information and forms for reporting notifiable incidents, as well as changes to their operations and organisation to the SSR
- Promoting guidance and information through our mailing list, newsletters, and on LinkedIn.

Consultation and engagement

The SSR has established a series of stakeholder groups to support the implementation and operation of the new regulatory scheme:

- **the Consultative Committee commenced in September 2024 and meets quarterly.** Its members, from peak bodies, contribute to discussions at a systems level. The group is a key consultation mechanism with the social services sector. The Consultative Committee is independently chaired by Adjunct Professor Susan Pascoe AM
- **the First Nations Reference Group was established in February 2025.** It gathers quarterly to discuss the regulation of Aboriginal cultural safety to support service providers to deliver culturally safe social services. Membership includes representatives from Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), First Nations people and regulators
- **the Service Provider Reference Group meets quarterly and was established in February 2025.** It represents the perspectives of service providers (also known as 'duty holders'), representing all service types and offers feedback to the Regulator. The group is co-chaired by Richard Marks, Director Social Services Regulation, SSR, and David Tennant, Social Services Regulation Taskforce member and former CEO, FamilyCare
- **the Lived Experience Reference Group will be established in 2025–26.** It will provide lived-experience advice and perspectives to the Regulator.



3
Reference groups

10+
Visits and tours

9
Webinars

800+
Webinar attendees

7
Factsheets

77%
Website engagement rate

88%
Social Service Providers satisfaction with education and guidance provided by the Social Services Regulator

50,839
Total website sessions

132
Advice and guidance provided to organisations



In addition to formal consultation mechanisms, the Regulator has prioritised visits to service providers across metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria to raise awareness of the new regulatory scheme and learn about the challenges facing social service providers, as well as the unique needs of service users in their communities.

The Regulator has undertaken more than 10 rural, regional and metropolitan service-provider engagement tours, in addition to meeting frequently with service providers and peak bodies.

Reduction of regulatory burden

In 2024–25, the SSR reduced regulatory burden through:



Developing and implementing effective information sharing to streamline registration processes and inform compliance assessments



Mutually recognising investigations of peer regulators, such as the Victorian Disability Worker Commission (VDWC), to minimise duplication



Undertaking joint investigations with other regulators

Statement of Roles and Responsibilities

In 2024–25, DFFH and the SSR published their Statement of Roles and Responsibilities that clearly outlines how both organisations work together to better protect social service users, with DFFH as funder and contract manager, and the SSR as regulator. It is designed to reduce duplication, streamline the administrative processes, and improve outcomes for social service users.

Information sharing

The information sharing provisions in the Act require relevant agencies to give precedence to the wellbeing and safety of service users or a class of service users over the right to privacy and allows them to share information for a range of purposes.

The new arrangement set out in the Statement of Roles and Responsibilities puts the onus on DFFH and the SSR to be proactive in sharing information, as far as permitted by relevant legislation, and does not prevent either from acting independently to fulfill their responsibilities.

The SSR and DFFH share information with each other to:

- help reduce regulatory and reporting burden for service providers
- effectively use regulatory intelligence
- help coordinate government responses to social services
- support functions under the Act.

In 2025–26, the SSR will continue to expand information sharing arrangements with other agencies to support the wellbeing and safety of service users.

Continuous improvement

As part of our commitment to continuous improvement we have worked hard to improve the registration process for service providers. The Act streamlines former registration, reporting and regulation requirements for service providers to promote the safe delivery of social services and protect the rights of service users.

Refining what is asked for as part of registration

In 2024–25, we made a range of registration policy decisions guided by the principle in the Act to reduce regulatory burden where appropriate. These decisions clarified issues relating to scope, key personnel, site details, sub-contractors and consortia. Refining what is asked for as part of registration also reduces the effort required by service providers to keep their registration up to date.

We worked with peer regulators and funding bodies to share information to support streamlined registration, as well as avoid service providers progressing applications to register with the SSR when they may not be in scope.

New registration system

In April 2025, we implemented our new registration system, a significant milestone. This system allows the SSR to accept and process registration applications efficiently and securely, while improving the registration experience for service providers.

Responding to service provider needs

The new registration system was piloted with a group of disability service providers and their feedback informed system enhancements and guidance updates to make the portal more user friendly. We also hosted additional webinars, drop-in sessions, and created an on-demand video to guide service providers through the new system.



Feedback since the new registration system's release has been positive. In addition to giving service providers visibility of their registration application and status, it has reduced the need for manual processes, supported data security, and enabled real-time reporting capabilities.

Compliance Monitoring Plan Pilot 2025–26

Consistent with the SOE and our Regulatory Approach Statement, the SSR has developed its approach to pilot its Compliance Monitoring Plan in 2025–26. The pilot will have three focus areas:

- organisational governance
- worker screening
- SRS.

The selected focus areas cover requirements that have been in place for a number of years, and service providers should have well-developed approaches in place.

The focus on organisational governance and worker screening will examine similar requirements under both the SSS and the CSS, with service providers assessed on one or both, depending on the services they deliver. In these areas, the SSR intends to take a graduated approach to increasing compliance monitoring and use this work to inform the further development of guidance for service providers in ensuring their ongoing compliance with the standards.

A representative sample will be identified among services. The pilot is in addition to the SSR's ongoing compliance monitoring activities.

Aboriginal cultural safety and inclusion

The SSS and CSS both include standards about Aboriginal cultural safety² and inclusion. The SOE outlines the Victorian Government's expectation that the SSR's regulatory approach is informed by and sensitive to Aboriginal cultural safety considerations and supports self-determination by First Nations people.

To develop its knowledge and understanding of cultural safety, all SSR staff members are required to undertake cultural awareness training. In 2024–25, this has included a focus on white privilege and systemic racism.

We are exploring how the new regulatory scheme can best support Aboriginal cultural safety and be responsive to the needs of Aboriginal communities. We are guided in this work by our First Nations Reference Group, which has representation from ACCOs and peak bodies.



Art commissioned by the SSR from Dixon Patten of Bayila Creative

Meeting ACCOs and peak bodies in person has also been a key priority for the Regulator. Seeing how providers deliver a range of culturally appropriate services to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people has been a highlight of regional engagement. The Regulator has met with representatives from the following organisations:

- Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-operative
- Dandenong and District Aborigines Co-operative Limited
- Ramahyuck District Aboriginal Corporation
- Mallee District Aboriginal Services.

The Regulator greatly appreciates the generosity of these service providers in highlighting the issues affecting the Victorian Aboriginal community and organisations delivering services to them. The Regulator has also attended events aimed at improving Aboriginal cultural safety, including as a panel member at the 2024 Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Forum.

The role of the First Nations Reference Group is to:



Provide input about the transition to the new regulatory scheme, and comment on its implementation, operation, impacts and effectiveness, particularly regarding the regulation of Aboriginal cultural safety within social service providers



Consider and advise on the Regulator's engagement and communication activities



Represent and reflect the perspectives of First Nations people

Opportunities for reform

As a regulator we use our experience administering the Act as well as the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* to identify opportunities to improve these regulatory frameworks.

Review of the Social Services Regulation Act 2021

The new regulatory framework began on 1 July 2024. Like many new reforms, a review of the operation of the Act must be conducted³. The review will focus on the first three years of the Act's operation and will be tabled by the Minister in Parliament. The review will be conducted by DFFH. To support the effectiveness of the new regulatory framework, the SSR informs DFFH of ways in which the Act may be strengthened as we test its provisions in practice, and of any improvements we identify in protections for social service users.

Working with co-regulators of the Child Safe Standards

As one of six co-regulators of the CSS in Victoria, we collaborate with co-regulators to take a consistent approach to enforcing the standards and sharing information in the interests of child safety. The SSR is a member of the Child Safe Standards Regulators' Senior Executive Group that oversees a joint work plan to address key actions and co-regulatory issues, including:

- regulation of one organisation by multiple regulators
- safeguarding Aboriginal children and young people and working with ACCOs to support Aboriginal cultural safety
- information sharing.

² Ministerial Statement of Expectation, page 5

³ Previously, the *Disability Act (Vic) 2006*, *Supported Residential Services Act (Private Proprietors) Act 2010 (Vic)*, and the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)* provided different registration, reporting and regulatory requirements.

2025–27 Strategic Plan

Our Vision



Social services are **safe and treat people with agency and dignity**

Our Purpose and Principles



Effective



Fair



Proportionate



Clear



Inclusive



Accountable



Collaborative

Our Outcomes

The safety of social services users is at the centre of social services delivery

Descriptors of success:

- ✓ Service providers and carers who pose an unacceptable risk to service users are excluded from service
- ✓ Service user feedback and service provider notifications inform our regulatory response
- ✓ Aboriginal service users feel safe and respected
- ✓ Personal characteristics of service users are considered and respected
- ✓ Service user information is appropriately collected, used, shared and protected

Service providers understand their obligations and deliver safe services

Descriptors of success:

- ✓ Providers understand the Social Services Standards and the Child Safe Standards and their compliance obligations
- ✓ Providers integrate meeting the Standards into their operations
- ✓ Providers comply with their obligations under the Worker and Carer Exclusion Scheme
- ✓ Service providers report that public guidance and education is accessible and useful
- ✓ Service providers continuously improve their services to reduce avoidable harm

A responsive, proactive and connected regulator

Descriptors of success:

- ✓ Continuous improvement of guidance and communications to ensure they are effective, consistent and accessible and respond to sector feedback
- ✓ A proactive approach to compliance monitoring that includes working with peer regulators and agencies
- ✓ Effective analysis of intelligence and information sharing with relevant agencies to achieve a connected and integrated view

Strengthened and more streamlined regulation

Descriptors of success:

- ✓ Enforcement actions are proportionate and based on risk
- ✓ A regulatory approach informed by intelligence and analysis
- ✓ Duplication and efficiencies are identified to reduce regulatory burden
- ✓ Right tools, people and processes are applied at the right time

Our Strategic Focus Areas

Regulatory approach

- 1 Embed a risk-based regulatory framework in our regulatory activities
- 2 Support a culture of continuous improvement across the sectors, standards and schemes we regulate
- 3 Implement the Government's child safety reform program
- 4 Capture, analyse and use data, information and intelligence to inform activity and improvements
- 5 Review and adjust regulatory approach based on first three years of operation

Peer regulation

- 1 Build and strengthen peer regulator relationships
- 2 Identify and work with key peer regulators to map the social services regulatory landscape
- 3 Proactively share information to reduce harm and decrease regulatory burden and duplication
- 4 Work with peer regulators to ensure service users are connected to support when they need it
- 5 Work with co-regulators to promote and enforce Child Safe Standards

Engagement with service users, providers and stakeholders

- 1 Proactively engage with and consider the needs of the diverse stakeholders who access, provide and interact with the social services we regulate
- 2 Increase awareness of the role of the Regulator
- 3 Develop sector specific engagement strategies and guidance that supports compliance
- 4 Actively seek the advice and perspectives of Aboriginal people on cultural safety and self-determination

Our people

- 1 Foster a workplace culture that prioritises learning, continuous improvement and staff wellbeing
- 2 Support our people to use their expertise and experience effectively and invest in their capability
- 3 Ensure our people have the role clarity and resources to do their jobs well
- 4 Ensure our people have awareness of cultural safety and regulate in a way that recognises the strengths and resilience of Aboriginal people

Business systems and processes

- 1 Enable risk-based decision making through effective collection, analysis and reporting of information
- 2 Streamline systems and processes to reduce administrative burden and duplication with a focus on registration and incident reporting
- 3 Continually implement protocols to protect our systems and information
- 4 Efficiently manage our budget to meet our statutory obligations and regulatory outcomes

Accountability and transparency

- 1 Build confidence in independence of the Regulator
- 2 Promote our role and impact to stakeholders, duty holders and the community
- 3 Seek and act where appropriate on feedback from stakeholders and regulated entities
- 4 Deliver on government expectations
- 5 Meet compliance and reporting obligations

Year in Review and Performance Reporting

Year in review

Regulatory activities

Child safety regulation activities

The SSR has taken a graduated approach to regulating the CSS, with a focus on educating service providers about their obligations.

Our regulation activities have included:

- engaging with organisations to provide information about the role of the SSR as an integrated sector regulator for the CSS
- raising awareness in relation to scope and compliance obligations
- providing information about how to implement the CSS
- initiating the assessment of minimum requirements and of specific CSS
- undertaking enforcement action
- providing ongoing monitoring and compliance advice
- collaborating with our co-regulators to address compliance issues
- information sharing with relevant agencies in line with the Act
- managing notifiable incidents received under s48 of the Act.

We assess concerns about non-compliance, taking into account the seriousness of the concern and the risk profile of the organisation when determining compliance action.

Between 1 July 2024 and 30 June 2025, the SSR contacted organisations and relevant agencies to request information for the purposes of determining scope, investigating, and assessing compliance.



34

The number of reminder of obligations and notices to comply issued



2

Improvement notices issued

We completed 173 CSS compliance activities in our first year of operation, with a further 9 remaining open as of 30 June 2025 (including any compliance activity commenced in 2023–2024 under the HSR). We also provided advice and guidance about the CSS to 132 organisations through our help desk and sent 29 letters to newly registered SSR providers about the CSS.

We contacted organisations and relevant agencies to request information for the purpose of determining scope, investigating, and assessing compliance. In addition, we coordinated the exchange of information with CSS co-regulators in response to compliance matters where shared regulatory jurisdiction was identified.

Table 2.1: Data For Compliance and Enforcement Actions Under the CSS

Action	Number
Requests for information or documents made under s108 of the Act	4
The number of reminder of obligations and notices to comply with the CSS issued	34
The number of improvement notices issued under s138 of the Act	2
The number of requests for information (to relevant agencies and the Commonwealth) under s193 of the Act	5

While all service providers the SSR engaged with indicated their commitment to child safety, some common themes or issues were found to contribute in cases of non-compliance with the CSS. They included the following:

- insufficient risk-management, including risk frameworks at an organisational level and/or risk assessments at the service area level
- service provider complaint processes were not clearly communicated and understood by children, young people and families
- records of staff training were not kept and/or communicated
- staff training programs did not adequately demonstrate cultural safety and child safety training.

Our CSS compliance activities resulted in service providers taking actions that included:

- implementing comprehensive risk-management plans
- reviewing and changing organisational governance arrangements as well as processes for child safety
- improving screening procedures for volunteers, employees and leaders
- developing and communicating accessible complaints-handling policies and procedures to improve responses to child safety issues and allegations of child abuse.



6,233

WCES
database
checks

Worker and Carer Exclusion Scheme regulation activities

WCES is designed to address risks posed by unsuitable workers and carers. It is one of our safeguards to protect WCES service users, including children and young people, from harm. WCES replaces the Suitability Panel Scheme under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*.

While the WCES Panel is being established, the Suitability Panel has continued to operate to determine matters where the decision to refer to a panel was made prior to 1 July 2024.

The WCES Scheme requires that WCES service providers check the WCES database prior to engaging or employing a person to work as a WCES worker or carer. For the 2024–2025 reporting period, the SSR conducted 6,233 WCES database checks.

Notifications of conduct that caused harm

For the 2024–2025 reporting period, the SSR received 69 notifications of misconduct by workers covered by WCES. These 69 notifications relate to 66 carers. A single notification may contain multiple allegations.

The SSR expects that the number of notifications will continue to increase as awareness of the scheme grows and organisations strengthen their processes to ensure the SSR is appropriately notified of all alleged misconduct.

Investigations of conduct

Workers and carers who have been excluded, including on an interim basis, must not work, or apply for work, in the out-of-home-care sector. It is an offence to do so.

While the SSR undertakes the assessment of notifications, investigations are conducted by independent investigators for referral to independent panels where appropriate.

Interim exclusion

The WCES Panel has the power to issue interim exclusions to workers and carers while an investigation or panel process is underway if they believe it is necessary to protect service users. They must reasonably believe the worker or carer poses an unjustifiable risk of harm and that the interim exclusion is necessary to protect service users during the period before a panel decides whether the person should be excluded on a longer-term basis.

A worker or carer cannot work in the out-of-home-care sector covered by the scheme while excluded on an interim basis. This ensures risks of harm to WCES service users in out-of-home care can be managed while the SSR and the panel consider the person's conduct.

The SSR issued three interim exclusions in 2024–25.

Exclusion of a WCES worker or carer

Exclusion orders are made by panels. There were seven workers or carers excluded in 2024–2025. During 2024–25, the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) overturned one exclusion order made in a previous financial year.

The SSR has supported Suitability Panel processes including the provision of investigation reports and appearing before the Suitability Panel to assist with their investigation process.

Information sharing

Under WCES, information is shared with relevant statutory authorities, including the Working with Children Check Unit (WWCC), CCYP, the VDWC and the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT). Information is also shared with Victoria Police.

Table 2.2: WCES Regulation Activities

Power	Total
Referrals to a panel following preliminary investigation – s55(4)(b)	1
Number of interim exclusions issued under s70	3
Number of hearings by a Suitability Panel or WCES Panel	9
Number of carers excluded in 2024–2025	7
Total number of disqualified/excluded carers on WCES database	84

Social services regulation activities

Registration activities

Social service providers (service providers) in Victoria who are covered by the new social services scheme must be registered with the SSR.

The purpose of registration is to make sure service providers have processes in place that will support safe delivery of services on commencement, to better protect service users and prevent harm. Service providers must satisfy minimum requirements as soon as they are registered and commence service delivery, including:

- meeting the SSS
- meeting the CSS, if delivering services to children and young people
- complying with registration requirements
- reporting notifiable incidents which occur during service delivery
- reporting changes to their organisation and operations.

Service providers that were registered with the HSR were automatically transferred to the new regulatory scheme on 1 July 2024.

Service providers that were not registered with the HSR were engaged throughout 2024–25 to register through a staggered and streamlined registration process. Service providers that were in operation prior to 1 July 2024 were able to continue operating throughout this period while the SSR registered them.

The Regulator must assess and communicate the outcome of a service provider’s registration application within 60 days of receiving the completed application. In 2024–25, 98% of applications were processed within this timeframe. If the Regulator needs more information from the service provider, the application may take longer than 60 days.

The SSR maintains a list of registered service providers on its website.

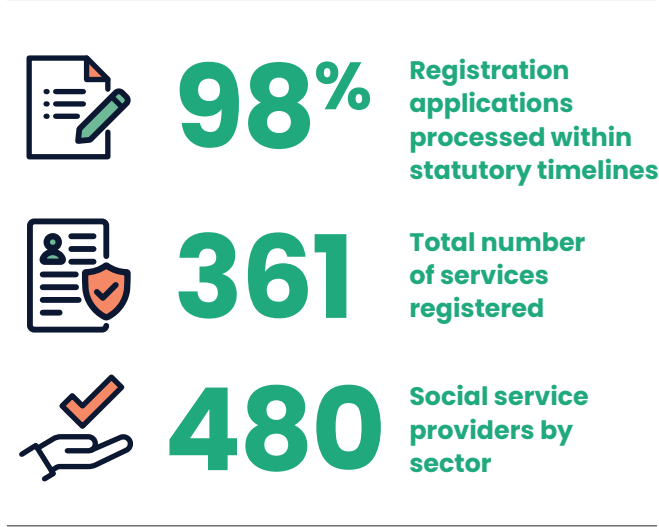


Table 2.3: Registration Activity by the SSR

As at 30 June 2025, there are 361 service providers registered into the nine prescribed classes of social service. In 2024–25, 64 registration applications were approved.

One provider can be registered into multiple classes of social service.

As at 30 June 2025, social service providers are registered into the following classes:

Class of Social Service	Total
Child protection services	4
Community-based child and family services	121
Disability services	89
Family violence services	47
Homelessness services	24
Out of home care services	77
Secure welfare services	1
Sexual assault services	6
Supported residential services	111
Total	480

Notifications

Service providers registered with the SSR are responsible for reporting notifiable incidents that occur during the delivery of a registered social service.

Reporting notifiable incidents informs the Regulator of serious harm and risks of serious harm to service users during social service delivery, and of actions taken by service providers to address the immediate health and safety of their service users. Notifiable incidents do not necessarily indicate non-compliance with standards.

The Regulator employs an integrated, intelligence-driven strategy to make decisions regarding reported incidents. By gathering and examining data, including from notifiable incident reports, we discern trends and risks within the sector. This decision-making approach aligns with one of the Regulator’s legislative guiding principles under section 8 of the Act, to, ‘make decisions using an intelligence-led and integrated approach that is proportionate to risk and minimises regulatory burden’.

The SSR received 3,896 notifications in 2024–25.

Of those, 2,808 were reviewed and closed at triage. This means that officers reviewed the notification and assessed that there were no indications of non-compliance and appropriate follow up actions were indicated. This supports the SSR to perform its role in providing assurance to service users and the community in the safety and quality of social services.

1,088 notifications received a more detailed review and follow up as required. Of these, 773 related to SRSs and 315 related to other services.

Incident reports form part of the SSR’s risk-based, intelligence-led approach to compliance monitoring. The SSR monitors trends in reported incident data which is used to develop intelligence and support regulatory oversight and action.



Compliance and Enforcement Activities

The SSR takes a risk-based approach to monitoring compliance by duty holders with the SSS, CSS (where applicable) and other requirements such as those specifically for SRSs.

The SSR published its Compliance and Enforcement Policy in August 2024, which outlines our approach and expectations of duty holders. The policy replaces the Compliance and Enforcement Policy previously published by the HSR.

During 2024–25, the SSR conducted 184 compliance inspections with 77 service providers at 83 sites across Victoria.

The Compliance and Enforcement Policy outlines our regulatory tools and levels, as well as the compliance and enforcement actions used by the SSR. The powers exercised by the SSR in 2024–25 are outlined in table 2.4.

Table 2.4: Powers Exercised by the SSR

Power	Total
Improvement notices issued under s138	106
Number of suspension of intake notices issued under s166 (note – not a power as an integrated sector regulator)	1
Power to obtain information, documents and evidence under s109 (may be equivalent to notice to produce per the <i>Child Wellbeing and Safety Act</i>)	4

Section 3

Financial Information & Compliance

Financial management information

On 28 August 2024, under section 53 of the *Financial Management Act 1994*, the Assistant Treasurer approved the SSR's financial statements to be included in the accounts of DFFH in its annual report.

A summary of the SSR's expenditure for the financial year ended 30 June 2025, can be found in Table 3.1. For further information, please refer to the DFFH 2024–25 Annual Report.

Table 3.1 – SSR Expenditure During the Financial Year Ended 30 June 2025

Expenditure	2024–25 (\$)
Salaries and on-costs	12,911,322
Operating expenses	3,247,914
Total	16,159,236

Social Services Regulator financial management compliance attestation

I, Jonathan Kaplan, certify that the Social Services Regulator has no Material Compliance Deficiency with respect to the applicable Standing Directions under the *Financial Management Act 1994* and Instructions.



Jonathan Kaplan
Social Services Regulator

Date signed: 17/09/2025

Appendices

Appendix 1: Disclosure index

This annual report of the SSR is prepared in accordance with all relevant Victorian legislations and pronouncements. This index has been prepared to facilitate identification of compliance with statutory disclosure and other requirements.

Table 4.1 Charter and Purpose

Financial reporting directions (FRDs)	Requirement	Page reference
FRD 22	Manner of establishment and responsible minister	16
FRD 22	Purpose, functions, powers and duties	12
FRD 22	Key initiatives and projects	16
FRD 22	Nature and range of services provided	13

Table 4.2 Management and Structure

FRD	Requirement	Page reference
FRD 22	Organisational structure	37

Table 4.3 Financial and Other Information

Financial reporting directions (FRDs)	Requirement	Page reference
FRD 10	Disclosure index	35
FRD 12	Disclosure of major contracts	41
FRD 15	Executive disclosures	Not applicable
FRD 22	Employment and conduct principles	38
FRD 22	Occupational health and safety policy	40
FRD 22	Summary of the financial results for the year	33
FRD 22	Significant changes in financial position during the year	Not applicable
FRD 22	Major changes or factors affecting performance	Not applicable
FRD 22	Subsequent events	Not applicable
FRD 22	Application and operation of <i>Freedom of Information Act 1982</i> (Vic)	41
FRD 22	Compliance with building and maintenance provisions of <i>Building Act 1993</i> (Vic)	42

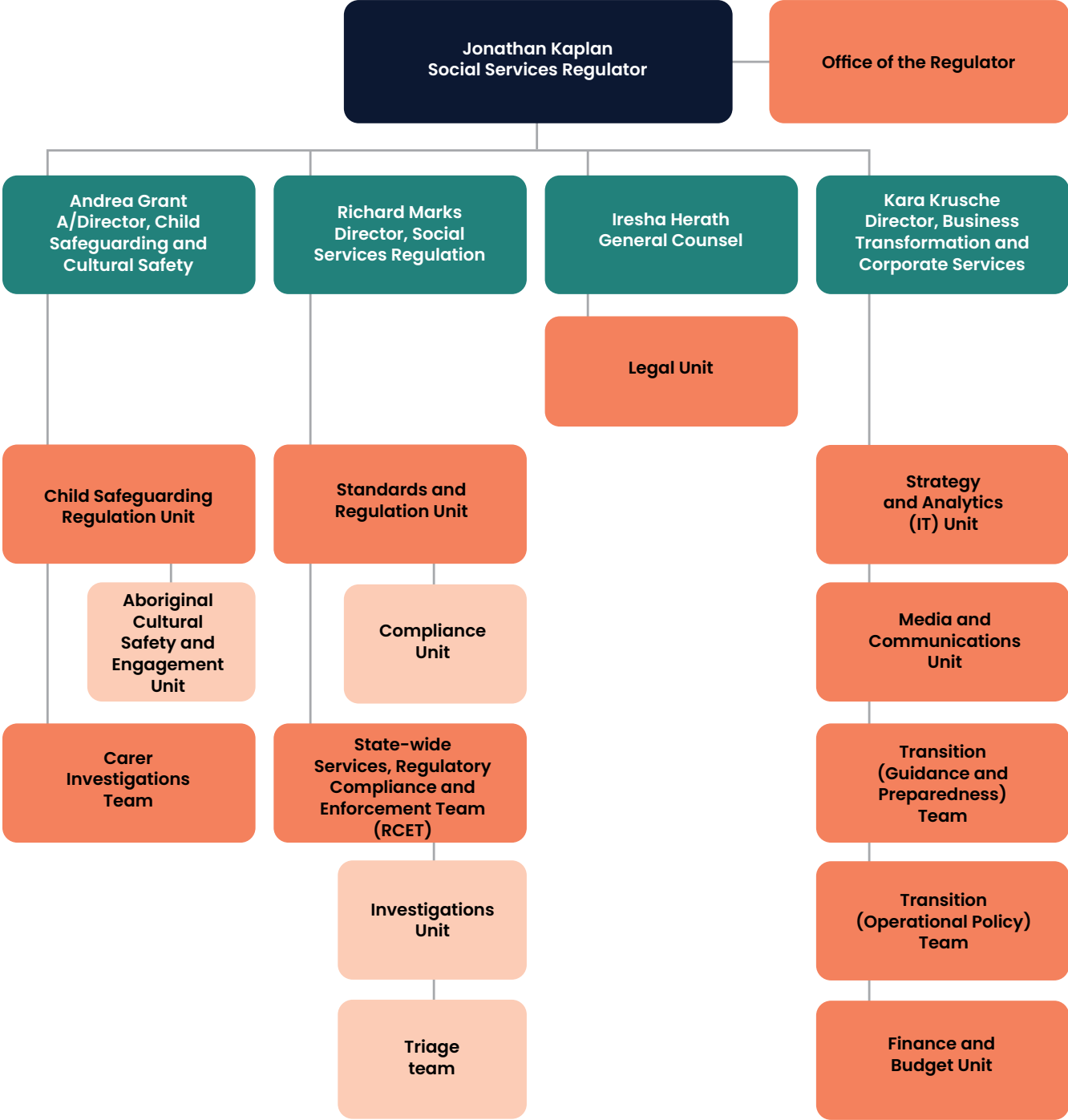
Financial reporting directions (FRDs)	Requirement	Page reference
FRD 22	Statement on National Competition Policy	Not Applicable
FRD 22	Application and operation of the <i>Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012</i> (Vic)	42
FRD 22	Application and operation of the <i>Carers Recognition Act 2012</i> (Vic)	43
FRD 22	Details of consultancies over \$10,000	40
FRD 22	Details of consultancies under \$10,000	40
FRD 22	Disclosure of government advertising expenditure	40
FRD 22	Disclosure of ICT expenditure	41
FRD 22	Reviews and studies expenditure	41
FRD 22	Statement of availability of other information	44
FRD 22	Asset Management Accountability Framework (AMAF) maturity attestation	Not applicable
FRD 22	Disclosure of emergency procurement	43
FRD 22	Disclosure of social procurement activities under the Social Procurement Framework	43
FRD 22	Disclosure of procurement complaints	43
FRD 24	Reporting of environmental data	43
FRD 25	Local Jobs First	43
FRD 29	Workforce data disclosures	38

Table 4.4 Compliance Attestation and Declaration

Standing Directions 2018 (SDs) under the <i>Financial Management Act 1994</i>	Requirement	Page reference
SD 5.1.4	Attestation for compliance with Ministerial Standing Direction	33
SD 5.2.3	Declaration in report of operations	3

Appendix 2: Organisational structure

Organisational chart as at 30 June 2025



Appendix 3: Workforce data

(Staff numbers, diversity, inclusion)

Employment and conduct principles

The SSR is committed to applying merit and equity principles when appointing staff. The selection processes ensure applicants are assessed and evaluated fairly and equitably on the basis of the key selection criteria and other accountabilities without discrimination. Employees have been correctly classified in workforce data collections.

Comparative workforce data

The following table discloses the head count and full-time equivalent (FTE) of all active public service employees of the SSR, employed in the last full pay period in June 2025. As the SSR was established on 1 July 2024, there is no comparative workforce data from the 2023–24 financial year. The role of the Regulator was appointed by the Governor in Council in February 2024.

Table 4.5: Workforce Data as of June 2025

All employees			Ongoing			Fixed-term and casual	
Measure	Number (headcount)	FTE	Full-time headcount	Part-time headcount	FTE	Number (headcount)	FTE
Women	63	60.11	35	8	40.77	20	19.34
Men	26	25.8	12	0	12	14	13.8
Self-described/ not provided	1	1	1	0	1	0	0
15–24	1	1	0	0	0	1	1
25–34	24	23.6	12	1	12.6	11	11
35–44	28	26.62	14	2	15.28	12	11.34
45–54	19	18.59	11	2	12.59	6	6
55–64	14	13.5	8	2	9.7	4	3.8
65+	4	3.6	3	1	3.6	0	0
VPS 1–6 grades	85	82.08	48	8	53.77	29	28.14
VPS 3	5	5	1	0	1	4	4
VPS 4	25	24.4	10	2	11.4	13	13
VPS 5	36	33.68	22	6	26.37	8	7.31
VPS 6	19	18.83	15	0	15	4	3.83
STS	2	2	1	0	1	1	1
Senior executive service	2	2	0	0	0	2	2
Other	1	1	0	0		1	1
Total employees	90	86.91	49	8	54.77	33	32.14

The following table discloses the annualised total salary (by \$20,000 bands, for executives and other senior non-executive staff) for senior employees of the SSR, categorised by classification. The salary amount is reported as the full-time annualised salary.

Table 4.6: Annualised Total Salary of Senior Employees

Income band, 2024–25 (full-time annualised salary)	Senior executive service	Senior technical specialists	Other*
\$220,000–\$239,999		1	
\$240,000–\$259,999	2	1	
\$260,000–\$279,999			
\$280,000–\$299,999			
\$300,000–\$319,999			
\$320,000–\$339,999			
\$340,000–\$359,999			
\$360,000–\$379,999			1
Total	2	2	1

* Other refers to the Accountable Officer (the Regulator).

Appendix 4:

Other disclosures

Occupational health and safety

The SSR is committed to providing a safe and healthy working environment that complies with all statutory requirements and codes of practice. This work is supported by our Occupational Health and Safety Committee.

Occupational health and safety (OH&S) incident management

During 2024–25, there were nine incidents reported as follows:

- Number of reported hazards or incidents – 9
- Number of ‘lost time’ standard claims – 0
- Number of claims – 1
- Average cost per claim \$855

Government advertising expenditure

The SSR did not commission any advertising campaigns during 2024–25.

Table 4.7: Consultancies Valued at \$10,000 or Greater

Consultant	Purpose of consultancy	Total approved project fee (\$) (excl. GST)	Expenditure 2024–25 (\$) (excl. GST)	Future expenditure (\$) (excl. GST)
Cube Group Management Consulting (Australia) Pty Ltd	Review of SSR’s operating model	\$300,000	\$50,000	\$250,000

Consultancy expenditure

Details of consultancies valued at \$10,000 or greater

In 2024–25 there was one consultancy where the total fees payable were \$10,000 or greater. The total value of this consultancy was \$300,000 (Table 4.7)

Details of consultancies under \$10,000

In 2024–25, the SSR did not engage any consultants with individual costs less than \$10,000.

Information and communication technology (ICT) investment

In 2024–25, the SSR had a total ICT expenditure of \$1,203,069.

Table 4.8: ICT investment

Business-as-usual	ICT expenditure related to projects to create or enhance ICT capabilities		Total ICT expenditure (\$)	
	Operational expenditure	Capital expenditure	Subtotal	
\$375,447	\$827,622	0	\$827,622	\$1,203,069

ICT expenditure refers to the SSR’s costs in providing business-enabling ICT services within the current reporting period. It comprises Business as Usual (BAU) ICT expenditure and Non-Business as Usual (Non-BAU) ICT expenditure. Non-BAU ICT expenditure relates to extending or enhancing the SSR’s current ICT capabilities. BAU ICT expenditure is all remaining ICT expenditure that primarily relates to ongoing activities to operate and maintain the current ICT capability.

Reviews and studies expenditure

In 2024–25, the SSR did not incur any reviews and studies expenditure.

Disclosure of major contracts

A major contract is a contract greater than \$10 million in value. The SSR did not enter into any major contracts during 2024–25.

Freedom of information

Freedom of Information Act

The *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act) gives the public access to documents held by the SSR. The purpose of the *FOI Act* is to extend, as far as possible, the right of the community to access information held by government departments, local councils, ministers and other bodies subject to the FOI Act. This applies to documents both created by agencies and supplied to agencies by an external organisation or individual.

An applicant has a right to apply for access to documents held by the SSR. This comprises documents both created by the SSR or supplied to the SSR by an external organisation or individual, and may also include maps, films, microfiche, photographs, computer printouts, computer discs, tape recordings and videotapes. Information about the type of material produced by the SSR is available on the SSR’s website under our Part II Information Statement.

Under the FOI Act, the FOI processing time for requests received is 30 calendar days. However, when external consultation is required under ss29, 29A, 31, 31A, 33, 34 or 35, a 15-day automatic extension applies. Processing time may also be extended by periods of up to 30 days, in consultation with the applicant. With the applicant’s agreement this may occur any number of times. However, obtaining an applicant’s agreement for an extension cannot occur after the expiry of the timeframe for deciding a request. If an applicant is not satisfied by a decision made by the SSR, under section 49A of the FOI Act, they have the right to seek a review by the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner (OVIC) within 28 days of receiving a decision letter.

Making a request

Freedom of information requests can be made using the options available on the SSR's website. An application fee of \$32.66 applied in 2024–25.

When making an FOI request, applicants should ensure requests are in writing, clearly identify what types of material/documents are being sought and be accompanied by the application fee to be a valid request. In cases of hardship, applicants can request for the fee to be waived.

Exemption from Freedom of Information Act

Section 210 of the Act creates a broad exemption from the *FOI Act*. It says that any document held by the Regulator or a panel is exempt from FOI, "to the extent" that it discloses "protected information." "Document" carries the same meaning it has in the FOI Act.

Section 188 of the Act (*Social Services Regulation Act 2021*) defines "protected information" as material that is:

- not already in the public domain
- obtained by or disclosed to the Regulator, an independent investigator, a panel member, an authorised officer or their staff
- gathered or shared in order to perform any function or duty under the Act (or another act)
- communicated either in the course of exercising regulatory powers, by another relevant agency, or under certain specified parts of the Act.

This exemption covers many types of SSR documents, which means members of the public may not be able to access them through FOI requests. More information is available on our [website](#).

Freedom of information statistics

In 2024–25 the SSR received no requests under the FOI Act and was not required to make any FOI decisions. No decisions were subject to a complaint or review by OVIC or referred to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).

Further information

Further information regarding the operation and scope of FOI can be obtained from the Act, regulations made under the Act and [OVIC's website](#).

Compliance with the Building Act 1993

The SSR does not own or control any government buildings and consequently is exempt from notifying its compliance with the building and maintenance provisions of the *Building Act 1993*.

Compliance with the Public Interest Disclosures Act

The *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012* encourages and assists people in making disclosures of improper conduct by public officers and public bodies. The Act provides protection to people who make disclosures in accordance with the Act and establishes a system for the matters disclosed to be investigated and rectifying action to be taken.

The SSR does not tolerate improper conduct by employees, nor the taking of reprisals against those who come forward to disclose such conduct. It is committed to ensuring transparency and accountability in its administrative and management practices and supports the making of disclosures that reveal corrupt conduct, conduct involving a substantial mismanagement of public resources, or conduct involving a substantial risk to public health and safety or the environment.

The SSR will take all reasonable steps to protect people who make such disclosures from any detrimental action in reprisal for making the disclosure. It will also afford natural justice to the person who is the subject of the disclosure to the extent it is legally possible.

Reporting procedures

Disclosures of improper conduct or detrimental action by the SSR or any of its employees may be made to the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC):

Level 1, North Tower, 459 Collins Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

Phone: 1300 735 135

Website: www.ibac.vic.gov.au

Public interest disclosure statistics

In 2024–25, the SSR was not made aware of any public interest disclosures made to IBAC by an individual regarding the SSR or any of its employees.

Compliance with the Carers Recognition Act 2012

The SSR supports the principles of the *Carers Recognition Act 2012*, to recognise the importance of carers and care relationships in our community.

The principles and obligations of the *Carers Recognition Act 2012* are encompassed within:

- the Victorian Public Service (VPS) Enterprise Agreement 2024
- VPS common policies
- flexible working arrangement guidelines, which support staff members in their roles as carers.

In 2024–25, flexibility was provided to SSR staff, including hybrid working arrangements to work both at home and in the office, personal leave, and individual flexible work arrangements to support caring responsibilities.

Compliance with the Disability Act 2006

The *Disability Act 2006* reaffirms and strengthens the rights of people with disability and recognises that this requires support across the government sector and within the community. It requires public sector bodies to prepare a Disability Action Plan (DAP) for the purpose of:

- reducing barriers to people with disability accessing goods, services and facilities
- reducing barriers to people with disability obtaining and maintaining employment
- promoting the inclusion and participation in the community of people with disability
- achieving tangible changes in attitudes and practices which discriminate against people with disability.

The SSR's DAP will be developed and come into effect during 2025–26.

Disclosure of emergency procurement

The SSR did not activate any emergency procurement activities in 2024–25.

Disclosure of social procurement activities under the Social Procurement Framework

As a Victorian Government agency, the SSR is aligned with the Victorian Government's Social Procurement Framework. The SSR's procurement activity is administered by DFFH, and our social procurement activities will be reported as part of the DFFH 2024–25 Annual Report.

Disclosure of procurement complaints

Under the Governance Policy of the Victorian Government Purchasing Board (VGPB), the SSR must disclose any formal complaints relating to the procurement of goods and services received through its procurement complaints management system.

The SSR did not receive any formal procurement complaints in 2024–25.

Reporting of environmental data

The SSR has a service level agreement in place with DFFH for the provision of office accommodation and fleet services. Environmental data relating to the SSR is included as part of the overall environmental data reporting in DFFH 2024–25 Annual Report.

Local Jobs First

The *Local Jobs First Act 2003*, introduced in August 2018, brings together the Victorian Industry Participation Policy and the Major Project Skills Guarantee policy, which were previously administered separately.

Departments and public sector bodies are required to apply the Local Jobs First policy in all projects valued at \$3 million or more in metropolitan Melbourne or, for statewide projects, \$1 million or more for projects in regional Victoria.

The Major Project Skills Guarantee applies to all construction projects valued at \$20 million or more.

The SSR did not engage in any applicable tenders or projects which met the required thresholds for the application of the Local Jobs First Policy during the reporting period.

Additional information available on request

In compliance with the requirements of the Standing Directions 2018 under the *Financial Management Act 1994*, details in respect of the items listed below have been retained by the SSR and are available on request, subject to the provisions of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

- a) a statement that declarations of pecuniary interests have been duly completed by all relevant officers
- b) details of shares held by a senior officer as nominee or held beneficially in a statutory authority or subsidiary
- c) details of publications produced by the entity about itself, and how these can be obtained
- d) details of changes in prices, fees, charges, rates and levies charged by the entity
- e) details of any major external reviews carried out on the entity
- f) details of major research and development activities undertaken by the entity
- g) details of overseas visits undertaken, including a summary of the objectives and outcomes of each visit
- h) details of the major promotional, public relations and marketing activities undertaken by the entity to develop community awareness of the entity and its services
- i) details of assessments and measures undertaken to improve the occupational health and safety of employees
- j) a general statement on industrial relations within the entity and details of time lost through industrial accidents and disputes
- k) a list of major committees sponsored by the entity, the purposes of each committee and the extent to which the purposes have been achieved
- l) details of all consultancies and contractors including:
 - consultants/contractors engaged;
 - services provided; and
 - expenditure committed for each engagement.



If you wish to make a request for this information, you can contact the SSR at enquiries@ssr.vic.gov.au.

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