

Strategic Direction 1: Better Access	
<p>Improved support for people who represent themselves at VCAT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established the customer service improvement program to implement key recommendations from our customer service review. As part of this program, we have started work to simplify and standardise VCAT processes. The project team is also looking at how we can rationalise the 14 phone numbers currently available for VCAT as an initial step toward a single number, to make it easier for customers to contact us. Launched online application forms for Civil Claims, Owners Corporations, Human Rights and Review and Regulation applications. This completes a program to deliver nine new online forms, which are easier to understand and faster to complete. Feedback indicates more than 90 per cent of applicants agree the online forms are easy to use. We are seeking to expand online services in 2016-17. As part of a major rebuild of the VCAT website, completed and user-tested the skeleton designs (wireframing) to ensure the site is intuitive and user-friendly. Signed off the ‘look and feel’ designs and progressed to the build phase. Continued a concurrent project to re-write all web content into plain English for the new site. Introduced a revised VCAT media policy, including media accreditation, to make it easier for media to report accurately and more frequently on VCAT matters. Improved media coverage gives us more opportunities for the community to know and understand how VCAT works. Opened the VCAT Residential Tenancies Hub (formerly VCAT Online) to tenants and private landlords. Previously the system was only available to real estate agents and Department of Housing representatives. Tenants and landlords can use the Hub to create notices (for example, to give notice that repairs are needed), apply to VCAT, pay related fees, and search for previous notices and applications. Completed the first phase of the Self Help Centre pilot with Monash University and started the second part of this project, which is due to conclude in May 2016. In this pilot, Monash law students assist parties at our main hearing venue (55 King St, Melbourne) understand the VCAT process. The students help self-represented parties, particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged Victorians, represent themselves in hearings by improving their access to VCAT’s services, information and advice and practical support.
<p>Plan for future accommodation needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing participation in two committees led by Court Services Victoria (CSV) for this purpose – CBD Major Asset Strategic Planning Committee and the Asset and Portfolio Committee.
<p>Support the development and use of multi-jurisdictional facilities through CSV</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing participation in a CSV-led project to develop new multi-jurisdictional law courts in Shepparton, now at early construction stage. The completed courts will occupy a new five-storey building, providing 7900m2 of space for courts, hearing rooms and jury areas. A range of clinical, legal and voluntary service providers will also use the facility.
<p>Modernise hearing room facilities and improve security at 55 King Street</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed way-finding and signage at 55 King Street, and implemented recommendations to standardise format and ensure signs include design elements that make it easier for people to navigate the building. Completed a safety and security audit of all VCAT venues including 55 King Street, the Preston Court/Darebin Intercultural Centre, Moe Town Hall and several small Magistrates’ Courts. We are assessing potential improvements to infrastructure, procedure and policy.

Strategic Direction 2: Community Involvement And Engagement	
Work in partnership with our stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worked with the Municipal Association of Victoria to deliver a presentation and tour of VCAT in December, as part of the induction program for new mayors from across Victoria. Local government is a stakeholder in many aspects of VCAT's work.
Review and improve community engagement and user group forums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Held 12 user group meetings to facilitate two-way communication between VCAT and stakeholders who represent large groups of VCAT customers. Trained customer service staff to communicate effectively with people who have limited English. The training covered the principles of cross-cultural communication, determining when an interpreter is required and strategies for effective communication with clients from a cultural and linguistically diverse background. Training of 52 staff began in March and will be completed in June this year. Raised awareness of diversity issues among staff and members through activities such as Diversity Week and Harmony Day, organised through VCAT's Diversity Committee.
Seek feedback from people who have had a matter heard at VCAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Began developing a customer satisfaction survey as part of the customer service improvement program, described under Strategic Direction 1, including how VCAT can use multiple channels to gain feedback. Used online surveys to gather feedback from users, including people have used our online application forms.
Improve the way we provide information and build knowledge about VCAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progressed a major rebuild of the VCAT website, which will focus on the needs of users, comply with government website accessibility standards, have mobile device functionality, more intuitive site architecture, and plain language content (see Strategic Direction 1). Continued a project to re-write all web content for the new website. We are using easy-to-understand language, removing duplication and contradictory information, and structuring the content to step our customers through the VCAT process. When we must use technical language, we explain what we mean in plain English. Provided advice to tenants, landlords, property managers and other residential tenancies users about the requirements for giving notices and applications, and calculating the earliest possible termination date, following Australia Post delivery changes on 4 January 2016.
Strategic Direction 3: Modernising Service Delivery	
Review and suggest updates to the VCAT Act and enabling provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued to respond to a range of proposed legislative reforms and reviews which affect or have implications for VCAT's jurisdiction. For example, we have made submissions in response to the Victorian Government's review of the <i>Residential Tenancies Act 1997</i>, the Consumer Property Law review and the Access to Justice review.
Support the development of Court Services Victoria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued to support CSV through actively participating on CSV committees that support the effective management of CSV.
Engage earlier with government stakeholders in the legislative process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have ongoing consultations with government departments and statutory agencies where new or amending jurisdiction is proposed or conferred on VCAT. More stakeholders are now contacting us earlier when changes with implications for VCAT's jurisdiction are proposed.

Review and expand the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified a need to develop appropriate measures of case complexity to better understand where ADR is best used and what other types of matters could benefit from ADR processes. We are developing these measures.
Drive process improvements in Registry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implemented changes to how we publish decisions from 1 February 2016, including sending decisions by email to parties who have given us an email address. This helps parties get decisions faster and saves time and money. All VCAT decisions with written reasons are now promptly published on the Australasian Legal Information Institute website (Austlii), unless there is a legal reason not to do so. Commenced a major component of our Customer Service Improvement program to simplify and standardise VCAT processes, which includes reviewing Registry processes in the Residential Tenancies and Civil divisions. Authorised 13 Registrars to use newly-delegated powers from VCAT's Principal Registrar from 14 December 2015. This helps to speed up processing of applications for adjournments and other procedural matters, freeing up VCAT members to hear more cases.
Expand our use of information technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Successfully implemented the online forms project, described under Strategic Direction 1, providing the Victorian community with online application forms for VCAT's busiest lists. Progressed an e-lodgement project for the Review and Regulation and Legal Practice Lists, to enable customers to lodge online applications and supporting documents. E-lodgement will deliver the information directly into our case management system. It will provide efficiencies by automating business processes using workflow tools. The project is due for completion by mid-2016. Commenced development of the Guardianship Hub. This will be a similar online service to our Residential Tenancies Hub, enabling customers to make applications, get hearing dates, make requests such as change of venue, access orders and more. It will interact directly with our case management system.
Strategic Direction 4: Improving Efficiency	
Improve governance arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progressed audit recommendations to improve our business continuity arrangements in partnership with CSV. Arranged a business impact analysis workshop to identify gaps in our current plan and improve responses. Monitored performance against our financial accountability framework. Completed an annual review of terms of reference for VCAT committees. Appointed an independent chair for our Risk Management and Audit committee.
Drive process improvements for Listings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reformed the management structure of our Listings team, creating the new role of Manager Listings and Manager Operations. This increases our capacity and capability to drive listings reform, which will ensure cases are heard as quickly as possible.
Review performance measures and ensure data integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed the way we assess timeliness targets and other process improvement measures. Implemented key performance measures consistent with the Courts Excellence Framework. Identified performance measures suitable for use at all levels of VCAT's operations – from team level to management. These measures form part of a new performance management framework for VCAT. Tested this framework to confirm that it helps us diagnose and respond to operational issues and demand.

Monitor the impact of fee regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VCAT's existing fee regulations expire on 30 June 2016. The Victorian Government began public consultation on fee options with the release of a Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) on 23 March 2016. A project group has been established to ensure a smooth transition to the new fee structure from 1 July 2016.
Strategic Direction 5: Investing In Our People	
Improve the way we manage our workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued to implement the VCAT workforce plan, which sets out how we recruit and induct staff and members. It also outlines how we develop capabilities, ensure safety and wellbeing, create an enabling culture and provide the right resources. Recruited two member support coordinators, a key recommendation of the member support review. Developed workforce metrics to support resource and workforce planning decisions. Implemented a range of initiatives such as Respect in the Workplace training, health and fitness programs, and cultural awareness training to build VCAT's skills and a positive workplace culture. Developed posters that drive traffic to our monthly internal e-newsletter, keeping staff and members informed.
Improve training and development opportunities for members and staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided opportunities for development against CSV's Capability Framework. With Court Services Victoria and the Judicial College of Victoria, we offered a broad range of development opportunities for staff and members. This included a strong focus on technology training for members, such as opportunities to learn online speech recognition software that can be used to prepare written decisions.
Maintain transparent appraisal processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Held five workshops to improve staff performance discussions and use of Personal Development Plans.