



# Department of Human Services Strategic Plan



# Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Human Services (DHS), acknowledge and respect Aboriginal people as South Australia's First Peoples and the Traditional Owners and occupants of lands and waters of South Australia. We respect and celebrate the varied cultural and spiritual identities of Aboriginal communities.

Aboriginal people have the right to live free from discrimination of any kind, and to exercise and enjoy their rights to family and culture in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

**Terminology statement:** The term Aboriginal has been used throughout this document to reference all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. DHS acknowledges and respects this preference of the South Australian Aboriginal community in written and spoken language.





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## Message from the Chief Executive

I am excited to present our DHS Strategic Plan. It provides a unified direction and reflects our shared commitment to support individuals and families and ensure our communities are thriving.

Our work brings together a suite of programs, services, policies, and operations with one purpose: to make a real and lasting difference for the people and communities we serve.

This strategic plan is practical, future-focused, grounded in our shared values and identifies how we can make a difference for the people in our community.

To DHS staff, thank you for helping shape these principles to guide our work.

I want you to think of this plan as more than a document. It grounds the work you do and supports the decisions you make.

I encourage you to use it as a tool—to help you prioritise, collaborate, and innovate towards our shared purpose and the strategic priorities we've shaped together.

Our department is recognised for delivering compassionate, high-quality services across South Australia. I want to thank you for your dedication and passion, which have enabled us to provide outstanding frontline services, care for our staff, and leadership in developing policies across government.

Together, we will continue to deliver real benefits for the people and communities of South Australia.

**Sandy Pitcher** (she/her)  
Chief Executive

# Our Strategic Plan and what guides it

**This Strategic Plan sets the direction for our department for the years ahead.**

**It brings together our programs and front-line services by clearly declaring what matters most to us and the difference we want to make.**

By linking our everyday work to our long-term purpose, the plan helps us focus our energy, use resources wisely and deliver real benefits for the people and communities we serve.

The plan works alongside other important frameworks and commitments, including our DHS Outcomes Framework, the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, and the policies and laws that guide our work. Together, they give us a strong and consistent foundation for action.

**It is important that the Strategic Plan is read with an understanding of:**

## **Closing the Gap**

Under the National Agreement, we are committed to four priority reforms:

- 1** Building formal partnerships and shared decision-making
- 2** Strengthening the community-controlled sector
- 3** Transforming government organisations
- 4** Sharing access to data and information at a regional level.

This means building genuine, long-term partnerships to guide programs and services, supporting progress towards Aboriginal self-determination. This Strategic Plan complements the DHS Closing the Gap Policy Framework, Innovate Reconciliation Plan, and Aboriginal Workforce Strategy.

## **DHS Outcomes Framework**

This framework describes how we will look to make an impact across key areas of wellbeing. It helps us focus investment on the most important priorities, as well as measures whether we have been successful, with a belief that greater equity leads to a fairer and more just South Australia for everyone.

Each business unit will use the Strategic Plan to shape its own annual business plan, making sure individual, team and organisational priorities all work towards the same goals.

This approach keeps us accountable and ensures we stay true to our values – to do no harm, to create equity and inclusion, and to recognise and value diversity in all that we do.



# Our Purpose

We partner with people, communities and organisations to empower and build the capability and capacity of South Australians, challenging systems to address disadvantage and exclusion

This statement reflects both the scope of our work and the impact we strive to create, not only delivering services but shaping systems and enabling change that empowers South Australians today and into the future.



# Our Vision

A future of equity, wellbeing and quality of life for all South Australians

This vision speaks to our belief that lasting change comes from the ground up, and that by centring community and committing to tangible progress, we can help create a more equitable, inclusive, and thriving South Australia for generations to come.





# Our Priorities

**These priorities translate our vision and purpose into focused areas of action.**

**They clarify what matters most, guide resource allocation, and provide a shared framework for decision-making.**

These interconnected strategic priorities will continue to support the delivery of high quality, modern, core services in our communities. They will ensure we continue to provide a human services system that is community-centred, locally driven, coordinated, responsive, proactive and culturally safe.

## **Safeguarding human rights and preventing harm**

We uphold the dignity, rights and safety of all South Australians by embedding prevention, early intervention, and accessible and culturally safe practice across our work.

## **Improving outcomes of Aboriginal people**

We are accountable and culturally responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people and ensure our work does not cause harm.

## **Leading, advocating and partnering for impact**

We partner with purpose, steward systems with care, and influence progress towards more inclusive, equitable and innovative approaches across sectors and systems.

## **Building capability and supporting communities**

We partner with communities to co-design and deliver services, programs and policy that are culturally informed, inclusive, and empowering, supporting local strengths and fostering long-term resilience.

## **Delivering outcomes with accountability**

We are committed to measuring what matters. We embed evidence, lived experience, and reflective practice to drive continuous improvement, learning, and transparency. We use purposeful information-sharing, and research, to guide our decisions, staying agile and adaptive to emerging challenges and opportunities.



## Safeguarding human rights and preventing harm

We uphold the dignity, rights and safety of all South Australians by embedding prevention, early intervention, and accessible and culturally safe practice across our work.

### Priority Outcomes:

#### 1 Transforming government to deliver for Aboriginal people

Aligned to Priority Reform 3 in Closing the Gap [Transforming Government Organisations], we have a strong focus on ensuring that Aboriginal people achieve equity.

#### 2 Stronger prevention, early intervention and system accountability

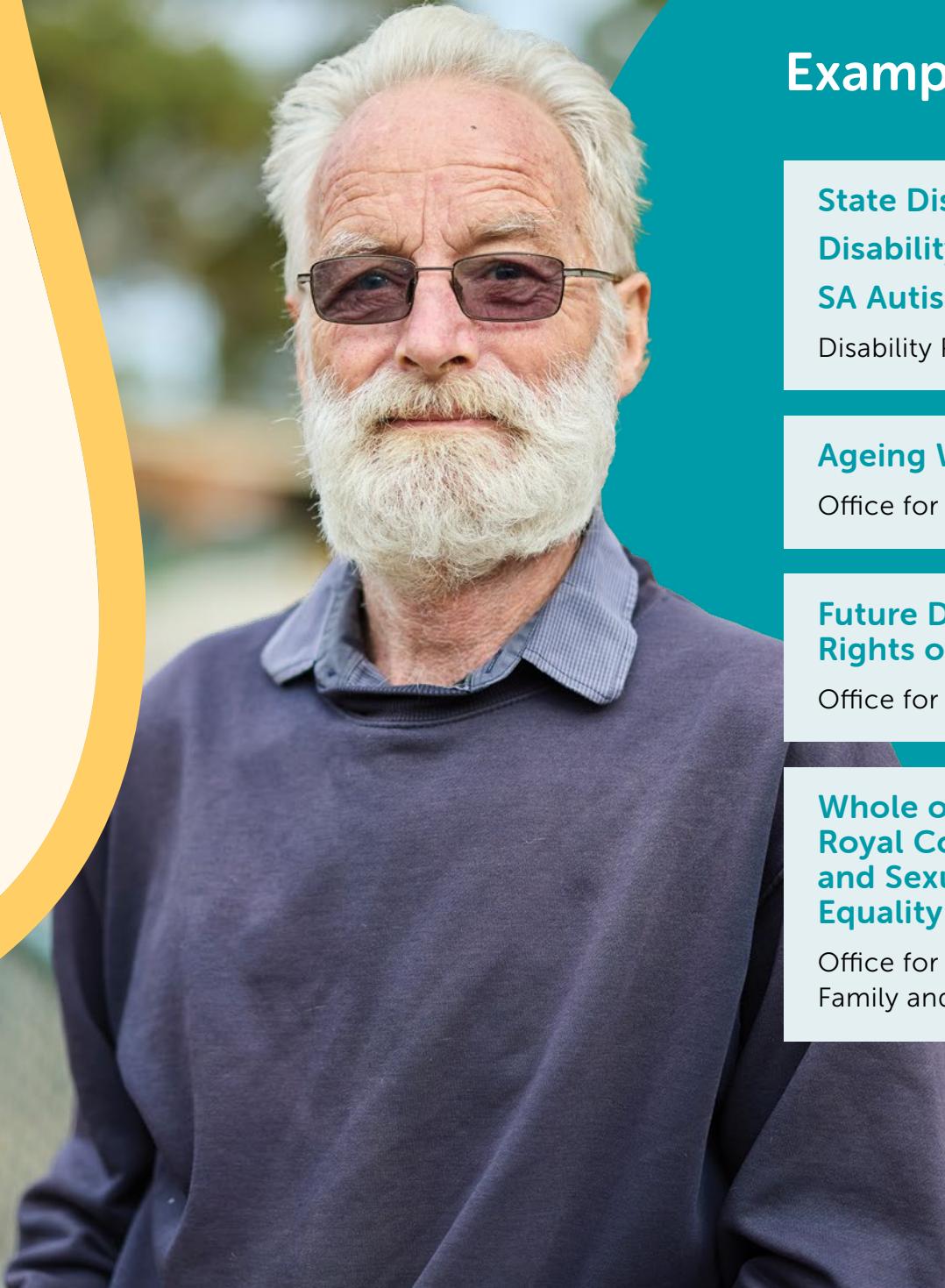
Deliver services that reduce harm, improve long-term outcomes, and lift the baseline of wellbeing for individuals and communities.

#### 3 Culturally safe, inclusive and accessible services

Our work is co-designed and delivered in ways that respect individual identity and uphold dignity and autonomy.

#### 4 Safer communities

We support coordinated, community-wide action to prevent and respond to violence, including but not limited to domestic, family, sexual, gender-based and youth violence, and champion equality and inclusion as a foundation for safety and wellbeing.



## Examples

**State Disability Inclusion Plan**

**Disability Access and Inclusion Plans**

**SA Autism Strategy**

Disability Policy and Reform

**Ageing Well in South Australia State Plan**

Office for Ageing Well

**Future Directions to Safeguard the Rights of Older South Australians**

Office for Ageing Well

**Whole of government response to the Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence (DFSV): Women's Equality and DFSV System Reform**

Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence



# Improving outcomes of Aboriginal people

We are accountable and culturally responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people, and ensure our work does not cause harm.

## Priority Outcomes:

### 1 Substantial progress on Closing the Gap

Progress is made on Closing the Gap priorities through trusted partnerships and targeted, culturally-led approaches that uphold Aboriginal rights and self-determination.

### 2 Stronger cultural safety and trust in services

Aboriginal people experience services, policies, and programs, that are safe, respectful, and grounded in cultural understanding, building trust and confidence in systems designed to support them.

### 3 A culturally representative and responsive workforce

The workforce is skilled, supported, and accountable for delivering culturally responsive services, with more Aboriginal staff in leadership, service delivery, and system stewardship roles.

### 4 Formal partnerships and shared decision-making

Aboriginal people are genuine partners in decisions that affect their lives, with shared power, formal agreements, and mechanisms that uphold self-determination.

## 5

### Enabling equity

Embedded in our approach is the belief that enabling equity under Closing the Gap will contribute to a more socially just society for all South Australians.

## Examples

### Child Diversion Program

Aboriginal Practice and Partnerships

### Metropolitan Aboriginal Youth and Family Services (MAYFS)

Aboriginal Practice and Partnerships

### Safer Family Services Aboriginal Cultural Practice Framework

Child and Family Support

### APY Lands services development

Remote and Regional Service Development

### Safer Places to Gather

Remote and Regional Service Development



## Leading, advocating and partnering for impact

**We use our position to partner with purpose, steward systems with care, and influence progress towards more inclusive, equitable and innovative approaches across sectors and systems.**

### Priority Outcomes:

#### **1 Strategic system leadership and policy influence**

We are a trusted system steward, championing reform and people-centred innovation. We influence policy, funding, and system design to reflect equity goals, lived experience, and community needs—actively shaping agendas for long-term impact.

#### **2 Building the Aboriginal community-controlled sector**

Aligned with Priority Reform 2 of Closing the Gap [Building the Community-Controlled Sector], our work builds the capability and capacity of the Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisation (ACCO) sector, recognising that a strong and sustainable ACCO sector delivers high quality services to meet the needs of Aboriginal people.

# Examples

## 3 Strategic and inclusive partnerships

We build strong, purposeful partnerships across government, the human services sector, and with communities to deliver coordinated, person-centred, and culturally safe initiatives.

## 4 Championing social inclusion

We champion equity and equality and actively work to disrupt systems that reinforce disadvantage and exclusion.

## 5 Future-focused and innovative

We contribute to and shape research and system reform agendas, actively pursuing opportunities to innovate and apply the Outcomes Frameworks to maximise impact and generate evaluation insight so we can do more of what works.

### A Learning Approach to Relational Commissioning

Child and Family Support

### Lived experience groups: Disability Engagement Group, Autism Strategy Advisory Committee

Disability Policy and Reform

### DHS Commissioning Framework

Social Policy, Evaluation and Reform

### Minister's Advisory Councils: Youth – Disability – LGBTIQA+

Social Policy, Evaluation and Reform



## Building capability and supporting communities

We partner with communities to co-design and deliver services, programs and policy that are culturally informed, inclusive, and empowering, supporting local strengths and fostering long-term resilience.

### Priority Outcomes:

**1 Formal partnerships and shared decision making with Aboriginal people**  
Aligned with Closing the Gap Priority Reform 1 [Formal Partnerships and Shared Decision Making], Aboriginal people are respected as knowledge holders and partners, with formal structures in place to ensure opportunity to provide genuine input into all our work, to accelerate policy and place-based outcomes.

**2 Equity and opportunity for all**  
We work in partnership to address systemic barriers and improve equitable access to opportunity, services, and economic participation across all communities.

**3 Empowered and resilient communities**  
Communities are supported to lead their own change through place-based and strengths-based approaches that grow capacity, build social capital, and enhance equity and wellbeing.

## 4 Inclusive, people-led services that centre lived experience

Our work is shaped by people with diverse lived experiences and community voices, to be culturally informed, inclusive, accessible, and genuinely responsive. Lived experience is recognised and embedded at every level as a source of expertise and a driver of lasting, meaningful change.

## Examples

### Child and Family Support System Lived Experience Network (LEN)

Child and Family Support

### Lived experience networks: Women's Equality and DFSV System Reform

Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence

### Ceduna Services Collaboration and Far West Community Partnership

Remote and Regional Service Development

### Port Augusta and Davenport Community Alliance

Remote and Regional Service Development



## Delivering outcomes with accountability

We are committed to measuring what matters. We embed evidence, lived experience, and reflective practice to drive continuous improvement, learning, and transparency.

### Priority Outcomes:

#### 1 Transparent and impact-focused reporting

We continuously measure, regularly evaluate, and publicly report on the outcomes and impact of our work, building accountability and fostering trust through openness and clarity.

#### 2 Evidence and lived experience at the centre

Our decisions, designs, and improvements are informed by diverse lived experience and supported by data, evidence, and real-world insight.

#### 3 Shared access to data and information with Aboriginal people

As part of our Closing the Gap Priority Four [Shared Access to Data and Information] commitment, Aboriginal people co-design data collection, have access to, and the capability to use, locally relevant data and information to set and monitor implementation efforts, driving their own priorities and development.

## 4

### Continuous learning and system improvement

We embed cycles of reflection and evaluation into our work, driving continuous improvement and ensuring our systems evolve in response to what works.

## Examples

**Adelaide University - BetterStart Group - Intensive Family Service evaluation (Child and Family Support System family preservation rates)**

Child and Family Support

**Screening Transformation**

Finance, Digital and Customer Support

**Ageing Well Measuring Success Framework**

Office for Ageing Well

**Outcomes Investment View**

Social Policy, Evaluation and Reform

# DHS ways of working – keys to success

**Our ways of working reflect the values we live by and the behaviours we commit to, guiding how we engage with communities, collaborate across sectors, and navigate complexity.**

**By holding ourselves to these standards, we ensure our work is consistent, accountable, and aligned with the outcomes we're here to achieve.**

## **Workforce at the centre**

We recognise and invest in our multifaceted workforce, including our invaluable volunteers, because we know people who are supported at work deliver great outcomes. That means ongoing development as well as a workplace culture that values safety, wellbeing, diversity, inclusion, and purpose across all our work streams and work sites. We foster a culture of psychological and physical safety where staff feel empowered to speak up, innovate, and act with integrity and care.

## **Valuing equity and diversity**

In all our work we are committed to increasing diversity, equity and inclusion, including and beyond the Closing the Gap Priority Reforms.

## **People-led**

We amplify the voices of the people and communities we serve by working alongside them. We prioritise inclusive, culturally responsive and safe, co-designed approaches. This fosters individual choice, agency, and shared decision-making which is informed by diverse lived experience.

## **Connected and collaborative**

We work in genuine partnership, with communities, across government, and within broader sectors. We take the time to build trust, deepen relationships, and ensure we understand the challenges from all sides, recognising that better outcomes come when we work together.

### **Future-focused**

We embrace innovation, emerging technologies, and new ways of thinking to meet the needs of current and future populations. We're not afraid to challenge the status quo or respond to complex challenges. We're committed to systemic and structural transformation, and we're open to what's next.





Government  
of South Australia



human  
services