

# VICTORIAN INSTITUTE OF FORENSIC MEDICINE STRATEGIC PLAN 2008-12

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## **MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR**

This five year Strategic Plan will be seen as pivotal for the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine. It launches us into our second twenty years, the Institute's second generation. Its success will depend upon some crucial personality traits of the organisation, especially our collegiality, a shared sense of vision and direction, and sharing responsibility for achieving our goals.

Good people working well together, using the tools provided to their best effect are a powerful combination. Add to this an effective quality framework and we will ensure the maintenance of our good reputation for quality services without which we cannot function.

With our legislative responsibilities in mind, combined with our obligations to the Victorian public, and a strong desire to be recognized for excellence in what we do, this Strategic Plan is our guide to the early years of our second generation.

**Stephen Cordner**

Director

July 2008

## **BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

### **OUR EVOLUTION**

The Victorian Institute of Forensic Pathology (VIFP) was established as a statutory authority in 1987 to provide independent expertise and forensic medical services to the justice system. A history of national debate surrounding compromised evidence in coronial and forensic cases and the absolute need for independence and high quality forensic scientific evidence were at the forefront of its establishment. The VIFP role and function was therefore enshrined in legislation as a policy response to address the substandard forensic services, mortuary and autopsy facilities that existed at the time.

To provide credible evidence and expert opinion through academic interaction, teaching and research, it was important to establish the VIFP as a dual entity with Monash University. The cycle of service, teaching and research is what underpins our contributions to justice, the community and the families we serve.

In 1995 the Institute amalgamated with the professional discipline of Clinical Forensic Medicine and reflected this growth by a name change to the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (VIFM). The relationship with Monash University also expanded at this time to now provide post graduate education and qualifications in both

disciplines - Clinical Forensic Medicine and Forensic Pathology.

Twenty years from its beginnings, VIFM now provides Victorian and international communities with expert and credible forensic medical services and tissue for transplantation. The Institute exists to promote, improve and sustain forensic medicine and related disciplines through its service delivery and integrated teaching and research functions. Dedicated research, combined with the unique and rich information sets at VIFM will help to build our knowledge base in death and injury prevention for community safety and benefit. Our reputation as an international leader reflects the integrity of the Institute's work in forensic medicine and science, and is important to our credibility locally.

### **THE NEXT FIVE YEARS**

We are now at a turning point in the Institute's history. In the 2008-09 budget, the Victorian Government provided significant additional funding to address the huge increase in demand for medico-legal death investigation services and to implement a new service model. As the Coroners Act is being re-written and we are embarking on a complete re-building of the coronial service side of our operation, it is clear this additional funding happens at a very important time for the Institute. It is imperative that the Institute achieves financial viability

within the term of this strategic plan. Furthermore, a review we are doing jointly with the State Coroner (together with the State Coroner's Office and Victoria Police) will define clearly our roles and responsibilities and re-write the policies and procedures relating to our forensic pathology and related forensic and scientific services. In these aspects of what we do, we are starting again.

Significant growth and demand for the Institute's services are also occurring in Clinical Forensic Medicine, including Nursing, along with the Tissue Bank. With expansion in all VIFM functions, we are really embarking upon the second generation of the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine. This is quite apt, really, in the 20th year of our occupation of the building which we share with Coroners, the State Coroner's Office and Victoria Police.

### **THE PURPOSE OF THIS PLAN**

This plan is a high-level, overarching strategic plan. It is designed to guide and assist the Institute in realising the key goals which are fundamental to achieving our vision and delivering our mission. The strategic plan is complemented by an Institute Business Plan, developed annually, which articulates in full detail the specific actions, measures and responsibilities inherent in delivering specific outcomes.

## OUR SERVICES

### OVERVIEW

Our statutory responsibility is the provision of independent, expert and credible forensic medical services to the justice system, tissue for transplantation, teaching and research. We deliver the following services on a daily basis:

- Medical Services (Forensic Pathology; Clinical Forensic Medicine)
- Forensic and Scientific Services
- Prevention Research Services (Injury & Death Prevention)
- Tissue Banking Services (Donor Tissue Bank of Victoria)

#### **Forensic Pathology Services:**

Forensic Pathology Services are responsible for the pathology components of the medico-legal death investigations required by the Coroner.

This includes services relied upon by Victoria Police and the criminal justice system elucidating suspicious deaths and homicides. The healthcare implications of the medico-legal death investigations are an important focus.

#### **Clinical Forensic Medicine Service:**

Clinical Forensic Medicine Services are principally concerned with the provision of forensic medical services to the living, expert forensic medical opinions regarding the investigation of crime, and assessing suitability to drive.

The clinical forensic medicine service also accommodates the only postgraduate teaching programs in clinical forensic medicine and forensic nursing in the Asia-Pacific region.

#### **Forensic and Scientific**

**Services:** Forensic and Scientific Services provide forensic scientific support service for forensic pathology and clinical forensic medicine, and comprises the disciplines and units of:

- Forensic Technical Services (mortuary operations)
- Toxicology
- Molecular Biology
- Histology
- Human Identification Services (forensic anthropology and odontology)

#### **Prevention Research**

**Services:** Prevention Research Services comprise the National Coroners Information System, the Work Related Liaison Service which undertakes research and analysis of work-related deaths, and the Clinical Liaison Service, which focuses on healthcare related deaths. Prevention Research Services take a scientific systems approach to the prevention of deaths and injuries.

#### **Tissue Banking Services:**

Tissue Banking Services are delivered through the Donor Tissue Bank of Victoria (DTBV)

which was established in 1989 as a central facility to retrieve, process, store and distribute cardiac and related tissue, musculoskeletal tissue, skin and corneas. Its operational model is unique in Australia. We are acutely aware of the special nature of human tissue, the altruism behind its donation and the significant obligation we have to donors and donor families to properly honour their gift. The DTBV provides support to the families of donors and to end users of donated tissue.

#### **Corporate Services:**

Our obligation to use our resources productively demands a high standard of management practice. Corporate Services includes the business management functions of Strategy, Governance and Risk, Finance and Business Services, Human Resources and Organisational Development, Quality and Improvement, and Technology Services, which provide support and enabling services across the Institute.

## **VISION MISSION VALUES**

### **OUR VISION**

We will be recognised for excellence in what we do.

### **OUR MISSION**

Underpinned by ethical principles our purpose is to:

- Provide independent forensic medical services to the Victorian public and justice system,
- Contribute more broadly to the health and safety of communities in Australia and overseas,
- Increase knowledge through teaching and research, and
- Enable the provision of high quality human tissue grafts for transplantation.

### **OUR PEOPLE AND CAPABILITY**

Our greatest and most valued asset is our highly skilled and committed workforce. Delivering on the expectations of this strategic plan is fully dependent on the contribution of each individual member of our staff. VIFM has a diverse workforce. We currently employ around 170 staff.

Positioning VIFM to meet the challenge of attracting and retaining a skilled workforce in today's competitive market requires us to be innovative. We must attract, develop and retain employees of the highest quality and provide a working and learning environment

that will enable employees to maximise their contribution to the achievement of VIFM's goals.

VIFM recognises the importance of the contribution of the Institute's people and the consequent obligation to provide a safe, supportive and stimulating work environment for all its employees which values, recognises and rewards effort appropriately.

### **OUR CORE VALUES**

#### **Respect**

We respect all people, our history, our calling and the law.

#### **Openness**

We are open-minded. Open to each other, and open to knowledge and learning.

#### **Service**

We provide services for the community, which are dedicated, responsive and client focused.

#### **Integrity**

We will be beyond reproach. We commit to truth, confidentiality, impartiality and accountability. We commit to systems that are secure, reliable, accurate, valid and safe.

#### **Innovation**

We are creative and curious. We are not afraid to do things differently. We will continue our search for knowledge and truth.

## OUR FIVE YEAR PLAN IN SUMMARY

### OUR GOALS, OBJECTIVES & PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The following four goals represent what we are seeking to achieve within the next five years. Along with the goals the high level objectives and performance indicators are described.

GOALS	OBJECTIVES & CONTEXT	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
<p><b>#1 Improve provision of quality forensic medical and scientific services and access to human tissue.</b></p>	<p>We will implement improvements to all functions and performance to deal with and manage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rising expectations of service (justice system and community expectations)</li> <li>• Growing demand</li> <li>• Significant new funding to expand medico-legal death investigation services, including implementation of a new pathology service model</li> <li>• New Coroners' Act with implications for VIFM's legislation.</li> <li>• Achievement of financial viability within the term of this Strategic Plan.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Coronial services system roles and responsibilities of VIFM and Coroners' Court clearly defined and implemented.</li> <li>2. KPIs for VIFM services to coronial system defined, benchmarked, regularly monitored and shortcomings actioned</li> <li>3. Stakeholder service delivery expectations researched, analysed, articulated and communicated</li> <li>4. Stakeholder service delivery survey undertaken annually.</li> <li>5. KPIs defined and monitored for VIFM noncoronial services to Victoria Police, and other relevant stakeholders.</li> <li>6. Financial performance is closely monitored to ensure financial viability is achieved and maintained.</li> </ol>
<p><b>#2 Ensure a highly trained forensic medical, scientific and technical workforce.</b></p>	<p>Australia's forensic medicine and science workforce shortages present a serious challenge to the provision of our services. We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen our teaching capabilities to ensure forensic medicine &amp; science theory and practice continually evolves.</li> <li>• Target and recruit forensic pathologists, forensic medical clinicians &amp; scientists with appropriate specialist training.</li> <li>• Take initiative, support other states and the commonwealth, and provide training and professional development across Australia.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Forensic pathologists and related staff identified and recruited in accordance with ERC Business Case requirements.</li> <li>2. Workforce Plan developed and implemented</li> <li>3. KPIs defined and monitored for improved teaching capabilities and provision of training and professional development.</li> <li>4. Industry issues and best practice options researched and where necessary implemented for forensic specialist service provision.</li> <li>5. Career path and ongoing incentives to ensure a sustainable forensic medical and scientific workforce is created.</li> <li>6. KPIs defined and monitored relating to numbers of forensic pathologists, forensic medical clinicians &amp; scientists recruited and provided with specialist training.</li> </ol>

## OUR FIVE YEAR PLAN IN SUMMARY

### OUR GOALS, OBJECTIVES & PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

GOALS	OBJECTIVES & CONTEXT	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
<p><b>#3 Increase VIFM's research output, with an emphasis on death and injury prevention &amp; public health.</b></p>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build on our unique partnership with State Government, Monash University, and other partners.</li> <li>• Undertake research to create new knowledge in our fields of expertise</li> <li>• Seek to collaborate with key partners and stakeholders, through dedicated research and by making better use of VIFM information and data sets</li> <li>• Develop and deliver practical advice, information and death and injury prevention strategies for government, industry, communities and families.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promote and conduct research as per Research Plan and as defined by Research Advisory Group and including product development research projects involving DTBV and other parties.</li> <li>2. Develop and implement VIFM death and injury prevention strategies to deliver practical advice and information for Coroners, medical practitioners &amp; professionals, government, industry, communities and families.</li> <li>3. Attract external research funding and increase research outputs including peer reviewed publications and conference presentations.</li> <li>4. KPIs defined and monitored for research projects, research outputs, research funding enlisted, prevention strategies, publications and presentations.</li> </ol>
<p><b>#4 Secure a sustainable future for the Donor Tissue Bank of Victoria.</b></p>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify, and then implement the governance, structural, resource and operational arrangements which will sustain the Donor Tissue Bank of Victoria (DTBV).</li> <li>• Increase the number of tissue donors and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of donated human tissue by increasing the health benefits per donor.</li> <li>• Support the DTBV in moving to a new platform of bio-engineering and regenerative medicine.</li> <li>• Strengthen the role of the DTBV in the alleviation of suffering.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Appropriate governance and operational arrangements for DTBV developed and implemented.</li> <li>2. KPIs defined and monitored regarding operational improvements.</li> <li>3. A specific marketing and public relations campaign to raise the profile of DTBV developed and implemented.</li> <li>4. Potential funding sources for DTBV identified and funding secured</li> <li>5. Strategy developed and implemented to increase tissue donors and maximise supply of tissue.</li> <li>6. KPIs defined and monitored regarding the number of tissue donors and supply of tissue and skin</li> </ol>

## GOAL #1

### **IMPROVE PROVISION OF QUALITY FORENSIC MEDICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SERVICES AND ACCESS TO HUMAN TISSUE**

#### OUR STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE GOAL #1

1. Develop a Coronial Services Centre Operational Framework with the State Coroner to articulate the separate and shared functions and associated service guidelines and protocols.
2. Develop and implement a new service model for medico-legal injury and death investigations at VIFM.
3. Articulate the next generation clinical forensic services model, to include an emphasis on interpersonal violence services, and through advocacy with Department of Justice and with health stakeholders, ensure endorsement, resourcing and implementation of the service.
4. Expand clinical forensic services for cases of interpersonal violence to incorporate a holistic healthcare model.
5. Review and update as appropriate physical resources, including buildings, equipment and technology, to meet current and developing needs.
6. Develop and strengthen all areas of VIFM's organisational capacity by:
  - Investing in our people to improve individual and organisational performance
  - Nurturing, supporting and developing our workforce
  - Providing a safety conscious workplace
  - Strengthening our quality improvement & risk management policies, systems and practices
  - Ensuring sound financial and business management including optimal use of resources, efficient business services and practices, and ability to identify and critically assess new opportunities and initiatives.
  - Improving communications practices through implementation of the Institute's communications strategy, strengthening of internal and external communications and building of strategic alliances and partnerships
  - Enabling development and implementation of an information technology platform appropriate to the Institute's ongoing needs
  - Updating VIFM's corporate governance arrangements to ensure they meet or exceed statutory compliance obligations and accepted good governance standards

## GOAL #2

### **ENSURE A HIGHLY TRAINED FORENSIC MEDICAL, SCIENTIFIC, AND TECHNICAL WORKFORCE SUFFICIENT FOR VICTORIA'S NEEDS**

#### OUR STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE GOAL #2

1. Secure the resources (funding and people) necessary to populate our workforce now and in the future.
2. Develop a workforce plan with a particular emphasis on attraction and retention and an immediate emphasis on medical services
3. Develop and implement an education and teaching strategic and action plan including:
  - Defining the Institute's capabilities and capacity to provide internal and external teaching programs
  - Identifying the Institute's optimum capacity for teaching places
  - Developing, implementing and resourcing development and training programs to ensure professional and technical skills and knowledge of staff are continuously enhanced.

## GOAL #3

### **INCREASE VIFM'S RESEARCH PROGRAMS AND OUTPUT, WITH AN EMPHASIS ON DEATH AND INJURY PREVENTION & PUBLIC HEALTH.**

#### OUR STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE GOAL #3

1. Build VIFM's knowledge and skills by:
  - Reviewing and modifying the existing information & data management system and the quality of data that enters VIFM data systems
  - Improving VIFM's research capacity, including post-graduate students, and outputs
  - Training VIFM researchers to supervise higher degree students
  - Increasing the number of staff with Monash University appointments
  - Providing research skills training for relevant VIFM staff
  - Attracting research active professional staff
2. Facilitate the conduct of fundamental and applied research to create new knowledge in our areas of expertise by:
  - Identifying knowledge gaps in consultation with our peers and our stakeholders
  - Securing ongoing funding to support the research effort
  - Establishing research collaborations within VIFM and beyond
  - Recognising and rewarding research achievements
3. Communicate progress, and raise awareness, to achieve better understanding of our role in prevention and public health
4. Effectively disseminate the knowledge we have acquired about injury and death prevention, public health more generally, and tissue banking.
5. Undertake evaluations of our services and publish these in the scientific literature.
6. Release our research findings to the media to stimulate public debate on important issues

## GOAL #4

### **SECURE A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR THE DONOR TISSUE BANK OF VICTORIA**

#### OUR STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE GOAL #4

We will :

1. Identify, and then implement appropriate governance, structural and operational arrangements
  - Identify key issues, challenges and opportunities
  - Develop and implement strategic and practical options to secure a new platform for the DTBV
2. Develop and implement strategies and actions to increase the number of tissue donors
3. Maximise the effectiveness of donated human tissue to increase the number of transplant options (number of grafts) per donor
4. Review internal systems and practices to improve operational and financial efficiency and effectiveness
5. Engage in research and development programs to incorporate emerging technologies and improvements
6. Progressively move to a new platform of bio-engineering and regenerative medicine.



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