

# Appendix A: Submissions and comments

As required by the *Audit Act 1994*, we submitted a draft of this Annual Plan to PAEC and have considered its comments. The *Audit Act 1994* requires us to publish any PAEC suggestions that the Auditor-General does not adopt in our plan. We had addressed these comments on page 4 of this Annual Plan.

## Responses received

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## Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

7 June 2024

Mr Andrew Greaves  
Auditor-General  
Victorian Auditor-General's Office

Dear Mr Greaves

### **Victorian Auditor-General's Office Proposed Annual Plan 2024-25 – Final comments**

The Committee acknowledges receipt of the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) responses to questions from the Committee concerning VAGO's Provisional Annual Plan 2024-25, as well as the Proposed Annual Plan 2024-25 provided on 24 May 2024.

As part of its role under ss 73 and 77 of the *Audit Act 1994 (Vic)*, the Committee has considered VAGO's response and provides the following final comments.

#### **Health related audits**

The Committee is very pleased that two new health related audits have been included in the Proposed Annual Plan 2024-25 – 'Elective Surgery in Victoria' and 'HealthShare Victoria procurement' – following its feedback highlighting the Department of Health's (DH) outcomes against performance measures in the 2021-22 and 2022-23 financial years and DH having the largest budget of all Victorian Government departments in 2023-24.

#### **Family violence audit**

In the absence of the proposed audit 'Family violence in Victoria' in 2024-25, the Committee commends the inclusion of the follow-up into VAGO's 2020 recommendations of the 'Managing Support and Safety Hubs' audit in the Proposed Annual Plan. As previously noted, in the context of recent reported acts of violence against women in regional Victoria and significant public investment into family violence services in the past 10 years, the Committee acknowledges the timeliness of this follow-up, which will examine the implementation of the *Orange Door Program* as the service entry point for women and children escaping family violence.

#### **Foster care audit**

With regard to VAGO's decision to defer the proposed audit 'Foster Care', the Committee maintains its position that it considers the audit should be reinstated in VAGO's 2024-25 program, in light of evidence the Committee has

received through its budget scrutiny work. In its *Report on the financial and performance outcomes*, the Committee found that between 2021 and 2023 there has been a year-on-year decrease in the number of new and accredited foster care households and an increase in the number of foster care households that have exited the system (pp.143-144). The Committee also found that Victoria provides among the lowest of all foster care allowances in Australia (p.145) and while the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing has undertaken steps to support carers, it has not yet announced or implemented any long term changes that will help attract or retain foster carers (pp.145-146).

The Committee also refers to the discussion regarding child protection services and residential care at its recent budget estimates hearings.

**Responses to performance engagement recommendations: annual status update: 2024**

The Committee acknowledges VAGO's response that it considers the level of assurance provided on its annual audits examining responses to performance engagement recommendations to be appropriate. However, the Committee considers VAGO's reliance on the attestations of Heads of Agencies in their provision of the status of recommendations and their timeliness to be insufficient for VAGO to reach a limited level of assurance. For VAGO to provide any level of assurance, the information provided by Heads of Agencies must be scrutinised.

In the interest of improving the effectiveness of such reports, the Committee suggests that VAGO interrogate a select sample of high-risk audits to check the accuracy of the information provided by auditees. The sample may, for example, include audits that examined services provided to vulnerable cohorts, significant areas of public spending or programs found to be particularly problematic.

Yours sincerely

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Sarah Connolly MP.

Sarah Connolly MP

Chair