

Media Release

The Hon Luke Donnellan MP
Minister for Child Protection
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NEW REGULATOR TO STRENGTHEN SOCIAL SERVICES SECTOR

Vulnerable Victorians will be better protected, with legislation to establish a new social services regulator passing the Victorian Parliament yesterday.

The new Social Services Regulation Act will strengthen the community sector by streamlining and simplifying regulation of social services and reducing red tape, while bolstering enforcement powers to protect people from harm.

The new system will establish a single set of Social Service Standards and a single registration process for hundreds of community organisations, as well as an independent regulator, with a statutory office holder to be appointed.

The reforms will be phased in from 1 July 2023 to give time for the sector to transition to the new arrangements.

Services covered will include family violence, homelessness, Supported Residential Services, and disability services not within the National Disability Insurance Scheme. It will also oversee children youth and families services.

The new regulator replaces the current Human Services Regulator and provides decision-making separation between the responsibilities of the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and decisions exercised by the regulator.

The regulator can identify shortcomings in service delivery and work with providers to improve standards, issue fines to providers in breach of their responsibilities, and initiate criminal proceedings for aggravated breaches of the Standards where there has been wilful and serious non-compliance.

The reforms will modernise regulation and protect the safety and human rights of service users, while supporting service providers to comply with the new standards.

The legislation also enables the regulator to recognise other regulatory schemes, delivering a more coordinated, simpler system for organisations that must comply with more than one scheme.

A Social Services Regulation Taskforce will be established to support and guide the development of regulations over the next 12 months, ahead of the scheme's commencement.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers Luke Donnellan

"We are strengthening our social services sector, ensuring Victorians can be confident they will be protected."

"New, stronger powers will mean the independent regulator has more tools to take action when providers are not doing the right thing by their clients."

"The new scheme will reduce unnecessary red tape for our hard-working community sector, and we look forward to working with these organisations and their users to develop the regulations that will make it work."

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