

NCOSS
MEASURING SOCIAL RESULTS
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GROWING VICTORIA TOGETHER

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss *Growing Victoria Together* in the context of approaches to measuring performance and, more broadly, measuring social results.

At the outset, I would emphasise that GVT is the Victorian Government's overarching strategic policy framework. It is intended to communicate to Victorians our Government's visions and goals and measure results for the Victorian community.

I think it will be useful to begin with a brief introduction to GVT, its role and purpose, and the history of its development. Then I would like to spend most of my time considering how GVT is used to measure social results.

Before I can talk about history, however, I do need to let you know that the Premier will release a refreshed version of GVT next week. It is at the printer as I speak. Much of what I say is therefore informed not only by the early history of GVT, but also the lessons we have learnt through our recent experience of rewriting – and carefully considering the value of – our goals and measures.

What is GVT?

As I have said, GVT provides an overarching strategic policy framework for Victoria.

It has three elements:

1. A Vision for Victoria (where we want to be in 2010)
2. Goals for Victoria (what matters to Victorians)
3. Measures to demonstrate progress in making the vision a reality

In essence, GVT aims to serve two purposes –

- to communicate the Government's vision to the community; and,
- to drive improvements in public sector performance that will result in better outcomes for all Victorians

Background to GVT

Growing Victoria Together was developed in the context of important changes to the role of government – especially the increasing need for governments to review the ways in which they represent, engage and communicate with the public.

In the context of GVT, this issue of governance translates to a focus on communicating to Victorians both the vision and the progress measures. GVT aims

to improve community understanding of government goals and to improve government accountability to the community for achieving them.

GVT is an emphatic statement about the importance of a triple-bottom line approach to government: the need to balance economic, social and environmental goals and actions. It is now widely recognised that GVT successfully pioneered a triple-bottom line approach to policy in Victoria.

GVT was launched in November 2001, in the form of an A5 booklet. It was widely distributed to stakeholder groups, and to the community through libraries and other public meeting places. It also had a dedicated website.

When GVT was launched, the Premier gave a commitment that regular reports would be provided to the public. This commitment has been met with the publication of two GVT Progress Reports in the Budget Papers for 2003-4 and 2004-5. Indeed, as our understanding of how to measure outcomes improves, we expect that our ability to report will also improve.

Update of GVT

The original GVT booklet stated clearly that “the priority actions and measures of progress will continue to be developed” to ensure that GVT was responsive to community concerns.

The Government decided in late 2003 that it was timely to update GVT. In conducting the update, we have re-examined the vision, the goals and the progress measures. We have also been mindful of the need to balance the responsive and the leadership aspects of representative government.

As I mentioned earlier, the Premier will be launching the refreshed *Growing Victoria Together* (GVT II) on 29 March 2005.

The logical starting point for the update of *Growing Victoria Together* was to review the ways in which it was viewed and used by key internal stakeholders. Opinion was sought from Coordinating Ministers, Secretaries and other senior officials responsible for both strategic policy development and corporate planning across the VPS.

Overall, there was a clear message from the review that *Growing Victoria Together* is an important and useful document.

Above all, the existence of a focus for longer-term thinking was seen as very positive.

And, GVT was described as having driven substantial change in several areas.

All of this added to a view that the update of *Growing Victoria Together* should be more along the lines of “refresh” rather than wholesale revision.

Two years of reporting on GVT has provided valuable insight into what works and what doesn't. As part of the update, all the current measures in GVT have been subjected to detailed consideration and extensive consultation. Now that we have better data and better measures we will know more about how our policies affect different aspects of Victorians lives.

Measuring Progress

And so, what I intend to do now is discuss the indicators that measure progress towards achieving the GVT vision.

Progress measures are the element of GVT that have most impact on driving public sector management. They have a large capacity to influence Departmental goal-setting, planning and evaluation.

They are also, however, critical from a communications perspective. Indeed, we see each progress measure as a 'message statement' for each important issue or goal. The measures show what success will look like in realising the vision.

Thus, it is critical to choose measures that are both meaningful to the community and are conceptually sound. We must drive the right public service responses and avoid perverse incentives. We must also express them in clear language.

In determining the progress measures for inclusion in the original GVT, a number of criteria were used:

- they need to be a sensible basis for integrated reporting on economic, social and environmental outcomes
- valid and reliable data sources need to exist
- there should be a mix of quantitative and qualitative measures
- they need to be linked to the levers available to State Government
- they need to be capable of being used to show progress for particular places and groups; and
- they need to be expressed in plain language.

Importantly, in gaining cabinet approval of the measures, we also got them to consider the indicators and data sources we were proposing to use for public reporting purposes. Extensive debate about measures among Ministers and officials is critical to their success as drivers of public sector performance.

Individually, each measure has a story to tell.

Sometimes, a measure is selected even when there are many important factors other than State Government action that contribute to progress. This shows that we are measuring more than government activity or even the impact of government activity - we are measuring community outcomes.

Sometimes, a bit of stretch in a measure is seen as a good thing. For example, a measure may include a somewhat aspirational timeline or target to drive a fundamental shift in thinking.

On the other hand, sometimes it is necessary to be less bold – recognising that small steps may be needed in the short term to achieve long-term goals.

So it is a balance.

Collectively, the measures need to tell a rounded (triple bottom line) story about Victoria – a story that, in total, gives a sense of how we are doing in creating the society we want by 2010. However, they do not attempt to be comprehensive.

Measuring progress in the refreshed GVT

The measures featured in the refreshed GVT allow for greater levels of detail, permitting more of the story to be told. We have an improved ability to disaggregate the data to gain further insight into the impact of change on different members of our community. This is particularly important in relation to Indigenous Victorians where increased attention to various aspects of disadvantage is a must.

The criteria used in the determination of measures in the original GVT continue to be relevant, with the addition of some extra pointers:

- The same measure can be described in a number of ways, provided there is internal agreement on indicators and data sets. This can help with communicating difficult concepts in simple language;
- And the corollary of this point is that agreement on indicators and data sets is important before a measure is agreed upon; and, finally,
- Where data is inadequate (but can be collected), it is important to seek a clear commitment to collection before a measure is included. Sometimes this may involve a commitment of funds from the relevant Department.

With improved measures, indicators and data sets, we hope that we will get better every year at telling this story. No spin – just a straightforward story of progress against measures.

This is important as the Government intends to build on the GVT progress reports to strengthen performance information, management and reporting, through better measures of how all government activities contribute to the goals that are important to Victorians.

Comparison with Productivity Commission Approach

It is worthwhile to contrast the GVT approach with the Productivity Commission's approach. The Productivity Commission's approach to measuring performance in its Report on Government Services has 4 key elements:

- a focus on outcomes
- comprehensiveness
- comparability
- progressive data availability

A key point of difference, as I have mentioned earlier, is that the GVT measures do not attempt to be comprehensive. Rather, they are highly selective, in order to focus political and bureaucratic effort. The measures included in GVT are a powerful tool for driving performance within government. Comprehensive measures would lose the impact of highlighting those particular areas of focus.

Further, GVT is ultimately focussed on community outcomes rather than measures of the effectiveness or efficiency of government interventions. That said, the Productivity Commission general framework for performance measurement is a particularly useful tool when formulating and analysing policy proposals to help Victoria reach the GVT goals. The framework's emphasis on effectiveness and efficiency is vitally necessary.

Implementing GVT

The implementation of GVT is clearly essential to the success of the framework as a mechanism to drive improved outcomes for Victorians across all government activity.

Therefore our work program includes a focus on:

- First, whole of government policy development and strategic planning; and
- Second, improved performance information, management and reporting.

We are striving to create a culture throughout the Victorian Public Service that values results, and seeks to analyse how government activities affect community outcomes.

Conclusion

To conclude, let me again reiterate that GVT provides the overarching strategic policy framework for Victoria.

It is inspirational – setting a vision for Victoria in 2010. At the same time it is very grounded.

For both citizens and the public service, the measurements are vital. Measures such as:

- Literacy and numeracy
- Public transport use
- Productivity
- Participation in communication organisations; and
- Quality of air and drinking water

GVT signals that the Government is firmly committed to the achievement of its strategic vision, and to strengthening its democratic accountability through regular and public reporting on progress measures.

Thank you.