

23 August 2021

Member briefing - Victorian Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy

On 27 July 2021 the Victorian Department of Health launched a [consultation](#) to support the development of the first Victorian Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy 2021-2031 (the Strategy).

Background

Victorian health services are already affected by antimicrobial resistance (AMR), with resistant organisms causing an increasing number of outbreaks in hospitals and aged care. From 2018 to 2020 there were 14 outbreaks in Victorian hospitals caused by resistant pathogens. These outbreaks result in disruption of care and significant economic costs – and are an ongoing concern for the VHA and its members.

The Victorian Strategy has been developed in response to a national approach. Australia's second [National Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy](#) was released in March 2020 and sets out the priorities for a coordinated national response. However, the states and territories are responsible for a wide range of actions in the national strategy. Victoria's proposed strategy seeks to put a number of these into action.

Summary

As the emergence of AMR is relevant for the health of humans, animals and the environment, the [consultation paper](#) sets out a 'One Health' approach to tackle the issue. One Health is a collaborative approach where multiple sectors and disciplines – at a global, national and state level – work together to achieve better public health outcomes.

In line with the One Health approach, the Strategy sets out seven objectives and corresponding priorities. A summarised, and health-relevant, version of these objectives and priorities is below:

- **Objective 1: Clear governance for Victorian AMR initiatives**
 - 1.1. Establish effective governance for all AMR initiatives
 - 1.2. Review regulatory frameworks to enable cross-sector initiatives and strengthen accountabilities
 - 1.3. Develop and implement two five-year cross-sector action plans during the life of the strategy
 - 1.4. Identify sustainable funding for AMR interventions
 - 1.5. Create opportunities for collaboration and engagement, such as an AMR community of practice
 - 1.6. Maintain an AMR Steering Committee for action plan development and strategy evaluation
 - 1.7. Monitor and report on progress measures, and review those measures
- **Objective 2: Best practice infection prevention and control (IPC)**
 - 2.1. Adopt evidence-based and nationally consistent IPC practices widely
 - 2.2. Maximise compliance with best practice IPC measures through adhering to targets, accreditation standards and quality assurance programs
 - 2.3. Improve professional capacity and capability for IPC
 - 2.4. Promote better IPC practices among the public
 - 2.5. Promote vaccination to reduce disease burden
- **Objective 3: Engage the public and key stakeholders on AMR**
 - 3.1. Develop and implement a coordinated One Health communication strategy
 - 3.2. Increase public awareness about AMR, enable action and sustained behavioural change through evidence-based communication activities
 - 3.3. Increase knowledge and access to information, enabling action on AMR among professionals across all relevant sectors
- **Objective 4: Optimal antimicrobial usage and stewardship practices**

- 4.1. Ensure access to infectious diseases guidance and advice to support all clinical decision making, and link primary care data systems with secondary care / hospital dispensing systems
- 4.3. Maximise compliance through adherence to accreditation standards and participation in robust audit and feedback and in targeted evidence-based improvement activities
- 4.5. Ensure appropriate use and safe disposal of antimicrobials
- **Objective 5: An integrated One Health surveillance and response system**
 - 5.1. Identify objectives and priorities for a Victorian One Health surveillance and response system
 - 5.2. Establish state-level governance to enable coordination of data collection, data sharing and reporting across human health, animal health, environment and antimicrobial usage
 - 5.3. Enable early identification and response to outbreaks and emerging pathogens
 - 5.4. Continue to contribute relevant data to the national AMR surveillance system (CAR Alert)
- **Objective 6: Establish a strong, coordinated cross-sector research, translation and innovation agenda**
 - 6.1. Establish a coordinated cross-sector research agenda
 - 6.2. Enable research translation and drive innovation
 - 6.3. Strengthen cross-sector and interjurisdictional research partnerships
 - 6.4. Identify funding for, and prioritise research in, the environment sector to close gaps in knowledge; for example, determine/quantify the risk of AMR contamination in the environment
 - 6.5. Identify, implement and evaluate mitigation strategies
- **Objective 7: Establish strong collaboration and leadership to contribute to the nation and global AMR response**
 - 7.1. Collaborate with other jurisdictions for shared surveillance, identification of gaps and response plans across all sectors
 - 7.2. Continue to lead national initiatives to increase capacity to prevent and respond to AMR
 - 7.3. Learn from international best practice
 - 7.4. Establish closer ties nationally to link in with Australia's national research agenda and with what is happening in the Asia-Pacific region and other countries

The department is seeking information about how individuals and organisations perceive their roles and responsibilities in relation to Victoria's response to AMR, challenges faced by the sector and current gaps in knowledge or action, and current AMR-related activities, projects and research. This information will be utilised to map the work already being done in Victoria, to form a baseline for evaluating the Strategy, and to further develop the first implementation plan to accompany the Strategy.

The department is also seeking specific feedback on the objectives and priorities above, and whether these are appropriate focus areas for the Victorian Strategy.

Next steps

The VHA is hosting a membership advisory group on this issue on Thursday 26 August 2021 to share insights on AMR and the Strategy, and to help inform a consultation response. The VHA will be engaging with infection control experts to inform the sector's policy position.

The public consultation closes on Tuesday 7 September 2021. Consultation feedback will be reviewed during October and November, with a view to finalise and publish the Strategy in late-2021.

As it stands, the proposed Strategy points to establishing a Steering Committee and the first of two five-year action plans as the initial steps required operationalise the Strategy.

The VHA will continue to monitor and engage on AMR and provide members with updates as this work progresses.



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