

A STRONGER COMMUNITY

The Bracks Government is working hard to deliver a range of services to our richly diverse community – from strengthening consumer protection to improving problem gambling services.

Victoria's cultural and linguistic diversity is one of our greatest strengths. Since coming to office, the Government has significantly increased funding to the Victorian Multicultural Commission's community grants program and introduced the *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act* to protect all Victorians from racial and religious vilification. We have also introduced the *Multicultural Victoria Act* which enshrines the principles of multiculturalism for future generations.

The Bracks Government improved the protection of consumers with the passing of the *Retirement Villages Act* which will give the 25,000 residents of these villages in Victoria greater rights while reducing red tape for operators. We have banned dummy bidding in the real estate sector and outlawed unfair contract terms in consumer contracts.

Victoria is developing a series of measures to remove barriers and improve access to government. Grant applications are being streamlined, and community strengthening programs are giving communities the opportunity to take control of their futures.

The Bracks Government has amended Victoria's constitution to recognise Aboriginal people as the original custodians of Victoria, with spiritual, social, cultural and economic relationships with their lands and waters, and has funded the establishment of Australia's first dedicated Stolen Generations Organisation.

Since 1999, the Bracks Government has increased women's involvement at all levels of decision-making. Through the women's register and training, we have increased the number of women on Government boards from less than 30 per cent to more than 40 per cent.

We have offered payroll tax exemptions for employers providing paid maternity leave and researched and produced a specific guide on women's superannuation and life savings options. We have also begun implementation of a new integrated family violence system, an overhaul of the system for dealing with sexual assault, and opened two specialist Family Violence Courts in Ballarat and Heidelberg.

The Bracks government supports an economically and socially sustainable gaming sector. The Government has acted to restore the balance in the management of the Victorian gaming industry. We have made the biggest funding commitment to problem gambling in Australian history, increasing funding for help services and conducting major public education campaigns to assist problem gamblers.

Our approach to problem gambling has stopped the proliferation of electronic gaming machines and gaming venues. The Government has commenced a major review of the State's EGM licenses, with the commitment that there will be no increase in total EGM numbers in the State. We have now introduced caps on the number of EGMs in 19 regions of high socioeconomic disadvantage.

The Bracks Government implemented the first comprehensive strategy in Australia to address problem gambling, including the banning of all gaming machine advertising, limiting 24 hour venues, introducing clocks and proper lighting in venues and banning the use of credit facilities for gaming.