Strategic Plan 2018-2021

1. Process. A review of the VANISH Strategic Plan 2015-2018 by the Committee of Management (COM) in 2017 identified that good progress had been made and objectives were met in some key areas, however the plan had been very ambitious in terms of its list of goals.

The 2018 plan was developed through a consultative process with the staff team and COM undertaking joint analysis and decision-making facilitated by professional adviser Chris Gillies, with the intention that it be realistic and executable.

2. Vision. The Vision was defined as: **That the human right to genealogical connection and identity is recognised and supported in the broader community and in legislation, policy and practice.**

3. Aims. It was agreed that in three years VANISH aims to:
Still be an independent organisation providing services & advocacy
Have a more diverse funding base
Have a broader reach with more target groups, with greater visibility
Have analysed changing the name and structure of the organisation

4. Strategic Directions. Strategic directions and intentions were identified under four headings: Client Outcomes, Brand and Positioning, Advocacy, and Organisational Sustainability, shown below.

5. Strategic Initiatives. Initiatives were identified for each intention, including:

♦ engaging with service users and stakeholders to better understand unmet needs and barriers
♦ reviewing and improving state-wide support groups and outreach
♦ building the capacity of VANISH to support service users utilising DNA testing
♦ exploring rebranding
♦ increasing the profile of VANISH and promoting VANISH services to a range of audiences
♦ promoting the voices of people with a lived experience and advocating on their behalf
♦ ensuring knowledge transfer as existing staff retire
♦ move VANISH offices to better accommodate organisational requirements
♦ diversifying funding
♦ exploring how VANISH services can be made available to a broader range of clients

6. Cross-cutting operational strategies: Two main cross-cutting issues were identified that would be considered across all initiatives:

Partnerships. VANISH will engage in partnerships, cooperation, collaboration and/or co-option in order to maximise our reach and impact. This may involve pooling resources, shared goals with clearly defined roles, and/or joint advocacy work.

Quality and Compliance. Continuous quality improvement and complying with accreditation standards are top priorities for VANISH and will be addressed in all aspects of our operations including governance.

7. Philosophy and Brand. It was identified that VANISH's philosophy and brand have evolved over the past two decades and should be revised to reflect that:

a. Self Help
VANISH acknowledges and appreciates that the organisation was founded upon grassroots movements and based upon a self help model and continues to recognise and value some key principles including: the role of service users as the key decision maker regarding the support they receive; having people with a lived experience on staff and COM; and service users and members engaging in peer support. Self Help will therefore remain a core principles and value. However, overall the community sector has shifted to more person centred approach meaning elements of self help have become mainstream and at the same time VANISH has increasingly engaged professionals on the staff team and COM. The term self help will therefore not be used to reflect our core identity and instead we will refer to and promote lived experience.

b. Our Brand
The name Victorian Adoption Network for Information and Self Help does not reflect the broader group of people with whom we work so we just use the name VANISH Inc. Rebranding should be considered as the name is seen by some as problematic. Changing our name has to precede any promotional efforts. If we decide to become a national organisation we will become a Company Limited by Guarantee.

8. Review.
The VANISH COM and staff team will undertake a mid-term review of this plan in 2020 to ensure that it continues to:
♦ Reflect our values and philosophy
♦ Address the needs and priorities of our existing and future members and service users
♦ Respond appropriately to the external and internal environments

Strategic Plan

Vision (what we hope for): That the human right to genealogical connection and identity is recognised and supported in the broader community and in legislation, policy and practice.

Purpose (what we are here for): To empower and assist those people who have experienced adoption, donor assisted reproduction or other separation from family by providing a formal structure through which to deliver efficient and effective advice, search and support services and advocacy

Mission (what we do): To assist people who have experienced separation from family members through adoption, out-of-home care and donor conception and advocate on behalf of these groups.

Values/Principles (how we behave): Respect, Empowerment, Integrity, Professionalism, Inclusiveness, Self Help.

Strategic Directions, Goals and Intentions

1. Client Outcomes

Strategic Goal: VANISH provides high quality, accessible services to our members and service users who will be supported through application of our specialist skills and expertise.

Strategic Intent: VANISH is committed to delivering high quality specialist services to existing and new clients. We are particularly concerned with addressing social, economic and physical barriers clients face in accessing our services and wish to reach people who are vulnerable, remote and/or isolated. Our integrated model seeks to provide different services for clients according to their different stages and needs.

Activities:
- Engage existing members and service users to better understand barriers and unmet needs, and undertake analysis of how potential service users are meeting their needs other than through VANISH.
  Design and implement DNA project
- Undertake review of Regional Support Groups re: viability and alternative outreach approach to meet the needs of regional and rural Victorians
- Ensure best practice eg timely search service with regular communication and support.
- Increase counselling services - number and reach, build professional training program, develop educational resources eg Fact Sheets, explore new services eg Intermediary, mediation etc.

2. Brand and Positioning

Strategic Goal: VANISH is known as the 'go to' specialists for search, support, counselling and training in relation to the needs of our members and service users.

Strategic Intent: VANISH is well known and respected among organisations, policy makers and academics engaged in this field. VANISH intends to increase our profile across the health and community welfare sector in order to increase our reach and impact both in terms of those directly affected by family separation and individuals/families who might support them.

Activities:

- ♦ Analyse costs & benefits of rebranding
- ♦ Increase the profile of VANISH services in Australia and internationally through the media and social media.
- ♦ Promote VANISH services to professional networks/forums, specific organisations, Neighbourhood Houses, CIS Vic, libraries, directories, GPs etc
- ♦ Review website to ensure plain language and search optimisation
- ♦ Value and build our IP as an asset
- ♦ Review membership proposition
- ♦ Increase number of community presentations
- ♦ Develop collaborative national website of PA Services
- ♦ Build a strong reputation through promoting successes (eg through newsletter etc)
- ♦ Strategically engage VANISH Ambassadors

3. Advocacy

Strategic Goal: VANISH influences decision makers and stakeholders to improve policy and practice to address the rights and needs of current and potential members and service users.

Strategic Intent: VANISH represents the rights and needs of members and current/future service users to policy makers and to professionals who interface with them. It is important that the knowledge and insights gained through 30 years of service inform policy and practice while at the same time maintaining a positive reputation with our government partners and funding bodies.

Activities:
- ♦ Promote the voices of people with a lived experience including supporting people to share their story.
- ♦ Meet regularly with government and respond to inquiries as appropriate.
- ♦ Review and agree how to gain consensus around our positions and how to promote them
- ♦ Develop positions on key contemporary issues which affect existing and potential members and service users.
- ♦ Proactively communicate VANISH's position on current issues.
- ♦ Develop and strengthen relationships with advocacy stakeholders and partner with other organisations for joint advocacy initiatives.

4. Organisational Sustainability

Strategic Goal: VANISH is a stable, sustainable, contemporary organisation with diverse income streams.

Strategic Intent: VANISH needs to be viable and sustainable in order to support current and future service users. This involves having appropriate, contemporary governance and operational structures, increasing and diversifying the types of funding, ensuring an appropriately skilled and stable workforce and having a contemporary workspace, technology and systems.

Activities:
- ♦ Develop and implement an appropriate staff succession plan to ensure knowledge transfer as staff leave employment with VANISH.
- ♦ Source and relocate to better offices that have access for people with mobility issues.
- ♦ Research appropriate types of funding then undertake fundraising including:- simple ways for members, service users and friends to donate or bequest- design initiatives/packages that will attract funding
- ♦ Explore and do business case for potential new client bases

- Review Rules (Constitution) to expand membership categories and encompass new legislation.
- Resource VANISH to undertake reviews and new initiatives (human resources and/or new skills).
- Review governance and operational structures to ensure contemporary and fit for purpose
- Review VANISH's IT systems and telecommunications services with the view to invest in more efficient, contemporary, flexible and cost effective solutions.
- Develop means for cost recovery (fee for service)