



COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Our approach and priorities 2016–17

The Victorian Commission for Children and Young People is an independent statutory body established to promote improvement and innovation in policies and practices affecting the safety and wellbeing of Victorian children and young people. We have a particular focus on vulnerable children and young people as defined in the Commission for Children and Young People Act (2012).

Our vision

That the rights of all children and young people in Victoria are recognised, respected and defended.

What we do

The Commission for Children and Young People:

- Provides independent scrutiny and oversight of services for children and young people, particularly those in out-of-home care, child protection and youth justice
- Advocates for best practice policy, program and service responses to meet the needs of children and young people
- Supports organisations that work with children and young people to prevent abuse and makes sure these organisations have child-safe practices
- Brings the views and experiences of children and young people to the attention of government and the community
- Promotes the rights, safety and well-being of children and young people.

Our approach

In delivering these functions we will:

- Provide frank and fearless advice and advocacy, strongly grounded in evidence, on behalf of children and young people
- Hear and highlight the views and experiences of children and young people to ensure these are central to planning and decision-making
- Apply a rights-based approach to our work drawing upon the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and Victoria's Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities
- Work collaboratively with government, the community and non-government agencies to identify and implement reforms that benefit children and young people
- Maintain a specific focus on the rights, safety and wellbeing of vulnerable children and young people, and on Aboriginal children and young people

- Work in a way that is inclusive, culturally sensitive and respectful of the diversity of children and young people.

Our priorities for 2016-17

Over the next 12 months, from July 2016 to June 2017, our focus will be to:

- 1. Advocate for Aboriginal self-determination to ensure Koori children and young people retain connection to family and culture, by:**
 - 1.1 Working to ensure all Koori children in out-of-home care are managed by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOS) and in Koori safe placements
 - 1.2 Working to ensure all vulnerable Koori families have access to culturally appropriate early intervention and prevention services that support their families to remain together safely.
- 2. Drive improvement and innovation across the out-of-home care service delivery system, by:**
 - 2.1 Overseeing and promoting the implementation of the recommendations of Taskforce 1000 and other inquiries, which have recommended wide-ranging improvements to the placement and support of children in care
 - 2.2 Inquire into the outcomes of a minimum of 10 per cent of Aboriginal children and young people in out-of-home care and repeating this on an annual basis
 - 2.3 Conducting an inquiry into the impact of the child protection permanency amendments (introduced by the *Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Permanent Care and Other Matters) Act 2014*) after the first six months of operation
 - 2.4 Informing the Victorian Government's Roadmap for Reform agenda and monitoring its impact on vulnerable children and young people.
- 3. Ensure family violence reforms are focused on children and young people, by:**
 - 3.1 Highlighting the unique risks and impacts of family violence on children and young people
 - 3.2 Informing and influencing the reforms through the Commission's involvement on the Family Violence Steering Committee and other family violence advisory groups
 - 3.3 Identifying systemic concerns and recurring themes related to family violence as identified through the Commission's child death inquiries.
- 4. Promote and regulate child safety in organisations, by:**
 - 4.1 Making preparations to administer and establish a reportable conduct scheme to centralise oversight of allegations of child abuse by relevant government departments, religious groups and non-government agencies, to commence operation on 1 July 2017
 - 4.2 Supporting relevant organisations to comply with child safe standards, designed to help protect children from all forms of abuse, from 1 January 2017.
- 5. Ensure lessons learned from child death inquiries drive system improvement, by:**
 - 5.1 Preparing an annual, thematic report highlighting trends and issues arising from the Commission's child death inquiry findings
 - 5.2 Conducting a detailed analysis of the recurring themes and issues in child death inquiries that involve suicide and cumulative harm

5.3 Conducting a detailed analysis of the recurring themes and issues in child death inquiries that involve children with complex medical needs.

6. Increase oversight of youth justice, by:

6.1 Completing an inquiry into the use of lockdowns, isolation and separation in the youth justice system

6.2 Monitoring and advising on youth justice policy, practice and programs to drive reform, including monitoring of serious incidents in youth justice

6.3 Promoting and advocating for community-based diversion and cautioning options, especially for Koori young people.

7. Enhance the participation of children and young people in the Commission's work, by:

7.1 Creating effective consultative and advisory processes to receive direct input from children and young people

7.2 Advocating for an independent complaints body with specialist expertise for children and young people on out-of-home care and youth justice.

8. Build a strong, vibrant, high-impact and effective Commission, by:

8.1 Developing and implementing an organisational restructure to integrate the Commission's new and existing functions to maximise impact

8.2 Improving internal systems and processes to increase the Commission's capability as an oversight and advocacy body

8.3 Developing and implementing a safe and healthy workplace strategy to build staff engagement and wellbeing.

We are committed to delivering on each of these priorities and will report on the impact our work has had on improving the lives of children and young people. For more information about the Commission and about the work of the Commission, please visit our website at: <http://www.cyp.vic.gov.au/>