

2022-2023 Yearly Report

# STATEWIDE CHILDREN'S RESOURCE PROGRAM

INNER & OUTER EASTERN METRO MELBOURNE



# MESSAGE FROM THE STATEWIDE CHILDREN'S RESOURCE PROGRAM COORDINATOR-INNER & OUTER EASTERN METRO

Welcome to the 2022-2023 Yearly Report for the Statewide Children's Resource Program (SCRCP) for Inner & Outer Eastern Metro (IOEM).

Over the last twelve months we have continued to see the ongoing impacts of increasing financial pressures: significant rises in living costs, including housing, with low wage growths. The return to pre-COVID service funding and yet a significantly increased demand has placed great strain on the workforce capacity.

Children continue to be impacted by food and housing insecurity, family and domestic violence, financial hardship and all of the issues adult clients face, as well as the impacts of parental distress.

Continuing numbers of staff experiencing Covid-19, flu and other illnesses have placed further strain on agencies, impacting service capacity.

With the return to increased face-to-face service delivery, there have been more opportunities to visit agencies to provide support to practitioners, including training.

I believe the following report reflects the efforts of practitioners across the eastern region to use the brokerage in ways that are meaningful for children and support their engagement with education and their community. It provides demographic and usage information and I hope will encourage practitioners to continue discussions with me about creative ways of supporting children.

The report also highlights the increased attention being paid to understanding the experiences of children and providing them with a meaningful service to support them and their caregivers to recover from adverse experiences.

I continue to provide secondary consults with practitioners around children, their families and options available and appropriate to meet their need.

Kindest Regards,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susie Lukis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Inner & Outer Eastern Metro Statewide Children's Resource  
Program Coordinator  
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# THE STATEWIDE CHILDREN'S RESOURCE PROGRAM (SCRP)



The role of the SCRCP is funded by Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) to assist, support and resource Specialist Homelessness Support (SHS) services, including family and domestic violence agencies to respond effectively to the unique needs of children and young people, encouraging best practice. We aim to be collaborative, building on existing practitioner strengths and skills to address the needs of children. The role of the SCRCP is flexible and whilst all operate to the same DFFH core functions, regional adaptations are encouraged to meet local priorities.

It is intended that the SCRCP be responsive, flexible and able to respond to changes in the systemic and operational environment.

Support for individual practitioners and agencies can look like;

- Secondary consultations with practitioners
- Homeless Children's Brokerage support and provision
- Training and resource provision (at no cost)
- Networking and advocacy
- Development of agency programs

The work of the SCRCP aims to build the capacity of practitioners within the sector to recognise the impacts of trauma on children, to provide child focused and child safe assessments, with strong engagement strategies and ongoing case management, contributing to a sustainable skilled workforce. Several case studies are included to highlight the very positive impact on children and their family of access to brokerage.

This work is supported by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and our Auspice agencies. Local agencies assist in informing local priorities and supporting local activities within the central Core Functions.

We continue to develop new resources including online training modules, featured on the Council to Homeless Persons and The Centre for Excellence in Child & Family Welfare training portals. The SCRCP have continued delivering training for the Conversation Cards and continue to build our online practitioner toolkit.

We were very fortunate that DFFH provided full funding for the SCRCP Coordinators to attend the full Australian Childhood Foundation's Child Trauma Conference. This conference reinforces the imperative to provide children with care and support as part of their own or a family case plan that recognises their unique experiences and needs. This in turn, informs the development of the SCRCP resources, training and conversations with practitioners.

# THE HOMELESS CHILDREN'S BROKERAGE PROGRAM

The Homeless Children's Brokerage Program provides funds across Victoria through the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement. The funding is distributed for children, (0-18yrs) accompanying their family in ongoing case management by an SHS service. It is limited to \$400.00 per child per financial year.

The Homeless Children's Brokerage Program is designed to enhance opportunities for children experiencing, or at risk of homelessness and/or family violence. The three main aims are to;

- engage and maintain children in education, including early education
- reduce social isolation by enhancing access to a range of specialist support, as well as social and recreational opportunities within their community, and
- provide social and emotional growth opportunities for children and increase relational bonds between children and their caregivers.

The aim of the brokerage is also to support practitioners to think about the views, wishes and needs of children as clients in their own right.

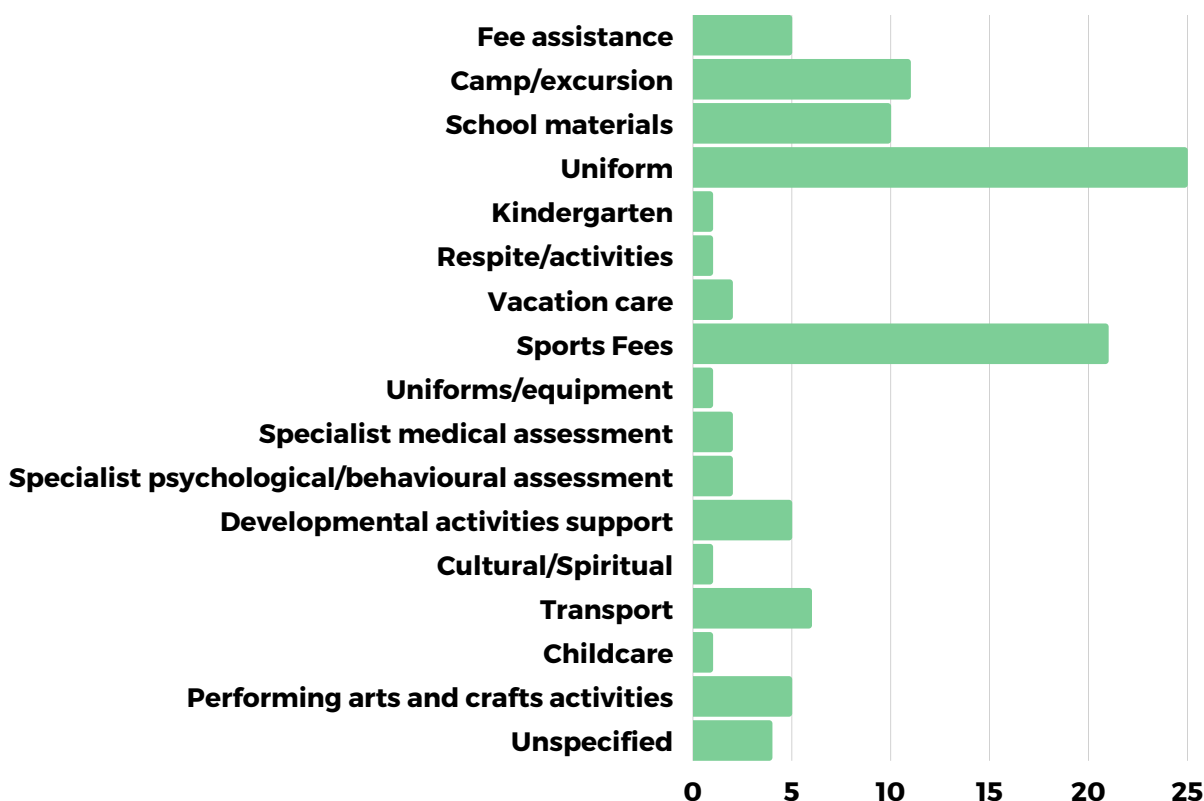
## 2022-2023 HOW WAS THE MONEY SPENT?

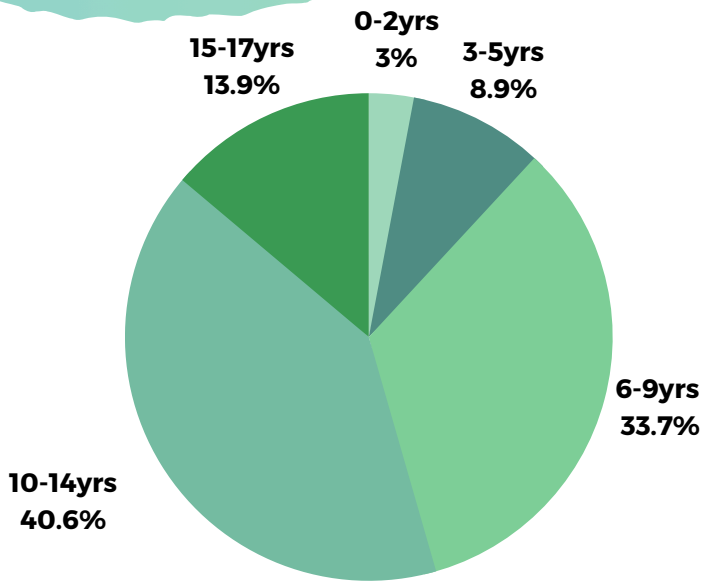
The financial year started with a total amount of \$34,914.00, including some rollover from the previous year. A total of 105 episodes for support were provided for children. Some children had more than one application approved.

The names of children and practitioners in the case studies have been changed.

### Top 5 uses of brokerage

Education remains the main reason for seeking brokerage support, a total of 55.5% of all brokerage spent. State School's Relief is the biggest supporter of school uniforms, text books and more.





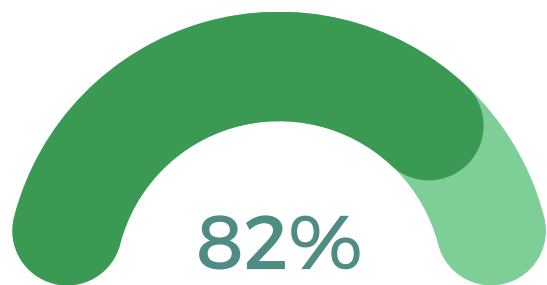
### Ages of children accessing brokerage

The 10-14yrs age group remains the leading age group for children with identified needs for brokerage.

31 practitioners from 12 different programs accessed the brokerage.

### 81 children or 82% had experienced family violence

We believe this is a conservative number as some practitioners identified Family & Domestic Violence as a presenting issue and selected 'No' to the question "Has the child experienced Family and Domestic Violence?"





## Case Study One

Mila, a 12yr old young person, was very keen to attend their Yr 6 Graduation in a pair of shoes that felt special, and allowed Mila to feel included with their peer group.

The Homeless Children's Brokerage Program provided Mila with the shoes of their choice. Mila's practitioner reported Mila had a wonderful night, felt an important part of the graduation and participated fully in the occasion.

The practitioner recognised the importance of Mila attending this milestone event, feeling fully included and able to enjoy the event marking such an important transition. Young people feel heard and seen and as though they have some choice and influence when their views and wishes are heard and responded to.

## BROKERAGE - A CONVERSATION

Whilst the brokerage is designed to support children and to provide opportunities for connection and participation, it is also designed to build the capacity of practitioners to be curious about the experiences, views and wishes of children, rather than those of the caregiver, and how to creatively respond.

For this reason, conversations with the regional SCRP Coordinator are always encouraged. There are a range of other funding/support options available as well as therapeutic options, and/or family supports that practitioners may not be aware of. It may also be helpful to discuss ways of exploring the views and wishes of the child, even if the child is not present when practitioners are seeing their caregivers.



Each Coordinator has a list of regional funding sources, information about State funded options such as State's School's Relief options, Camps, Sports and Excursion's Fund, Nursery Equipment Funding for newborns and more. Email: [susie.lukis@vt.uniting.org](mailto:susie.lukis@vt.uniting.org) for these and more funding options.

The more options children have to receive funding support, the greater the opportunities for families, to be well supported to engage with a range of services.

## Case Study Two

Taylah, 8mths, and her mother had recently moved into a safe place after family violence. One of the goals for Taylah and her mother was to participate in an activity to improve their attachment relationship, impacted by the family violence. Swimming lessons were provided for Taylah and her mother where they could participate in a time limited, directed activity together with a lot of skin to skin time, eye contact and opportunity for play and laughter. This supported Taylah's mother as she didn't have to 'invent' the play and it was a time for just the two of them without distraction. The practitioner reported Taylah and her mother loved the swimming together and Taylah's mother would prioritise this activity moving forward for the two of them. Taylah's mother felt it was helping their relationship and provided more fun for them both and a great life skill for Taylah.



## WHAT HAS THE SCRP BEEN UP TO?

We have welcomed several new Coordinators to the group. The Southern Metro have created a new position to split the region.

There is now a position auspiced at WAYYS and the ongoing position auspiced at Launch Housing into Bayside

This year the SCRPs teamed with the Council to Homeless Persons (CHP) the Centre for Excellence for Child and Family Welfare (CfECFW) and Wendy Bunston to develop several more e-learns. These modules are aimed at developing practitioner's understanding of the SCRP, Brokerage Program, impacts of trauma, family violence and living with out a home on child development and ability to thrive. They support meaningful engagement with children and their caregivers.

We continue to build the SCRP's Practitioner Toolkit.

For further information, support and training please contact Susie Lukis  
[susie.lukis@vt.uniting.org](mailto:susie.lukis@vt.uniting.org)





## SCRP LOCAL ACTIVITIES

The Children's Network Meetings have continued to happen face-to-face. Sharing of resources continues and several agencies have developed program partnerships as a result.

In January this year, as part of the strategic plans of both the Eastern Homelessness Service System Alliance (EHSSA) and the Regional Family Violence Partnership (RFVP), the Children and Young People's Working Group commenced. In line with the RFVP's commitment to have the voice of Lived Experience on every working group, we are privileged to have two generous, passionate, articulate young Victim Survivor Advocates. The group is taking the time needed to build safety, authentic intersectional inclusion and to develop the work of the group. I am so fortunate to chair this group of enthusiastic, curious and engaged representatives from across the region. This group meets monthly.

Agency outpostting and visits have continued this year. The monthly outposts are a 2hr visit to an agency, to be visible and present for planned or unplanned secondary consultations, information sessions for new staff or to provide mini training/update sessions to staff. At the same time I can provide a range of hard copy resources for staff to provide to families and children.

The partnership with Boorndawan Willam Aboriginal Healing Service is ongoing, giving me the privilege of continuing co-facilitation of their therapeutic group for primary age children, Koori Kids are Kool Kids.

A new partnership has seen me deliver the first two, full day sessions for Swinburne Diploma of Community Services and Cert IV Youth Work students around, understanding the experiences of and importance of including children in, assessments and service delivery. This is a wonderful start of tertiary institutions recognising the importance of child-focused course work to equip students for a workforce aligned with MARAM and the Information Sharing and Wellbeing Frameworks as well as the new Child Safe Standards. Sessions will continue into the future. These sessions are now part of the curriculum.

**"Fantastic! The best day I have had in my course so far!" Student Cert IV Yth Work 2023**

**"Now I understand the importance of empowering children and giving them choices as well as support, the same as their caregivers are given." Student Dip Community Services 2023**



The Eastern Local Motel Coordination Project, led by Lisa Harrison and FVREE, has concluded and produced a range of resources for the region. I was fortunate to participate in the project and contribute to the development of the Children & Young Persons Practice Guide.

Many people contributed to the eight guides and these are part of a suite of resources that can be used to keep those experiencing family and domestic violence safe and those using violence in view.



The Eastern Regional Coordinators group are continuing the work with the Personas previously developed in the Persona Project with the Journey Mapping Project. Lived Experience Advocates, Victim Survivor Advocates and practitioners have participated in the consultations and we look forward to sharing the finished report later in 2023. It is hoped these journeys will support agencies to explore clients with a range of needs and how their journeys may be supported by different agencies.

We are also planning for the second Navigating the East Forum to be held in May 2024 and the Navigating the East Guide continues to be updated every six months. This guide is located on the EHN (Eastern Homelessness Network) website. [www.ehn.org.au](http://www.ehn.org.au)

The **Hear My Voice Conversation Cards** training has been very well received. Many agencies have received their free set of cards with the free, three hour training session.

The training session incorporates child development, practical use of the cards and a multitude of other resources in an engaging and practical way.

The cards support children, caregivers, practitioners and agencies develop child focused case plans, to be compliant with the new Child Safe Standards and to complete child-informed MARAMs. They can also be used with the Information Sharing Schemes to prioritise the child's safety and wellbeing. They are a great resource to make child focused funding applications.

**"I have been using the conversation cards with some of the young people I work with, and they and I are loving them! They are especially helpful for those people who struggle to talk and are a nice way to open conversation by focusing on the cards rather than the young people feeling they have to focus on me. Some of the information the young people have given me would not have come up if it weren't for the topics on the cards. Very valuable! Practitioner 2023**

Agency Outposts continue, offering agencies the opportunity for practitioners to do regular onsite secondary consults with me, to have information sessions or short training as wanted by an agency or a team. Free resources are provided. If there are particular needs, they can be planned for and if not, discussions/questions can arise on the day.

I continue to attend the Eastern Homelessness Service System Alliance (EHSSA) and Homelessness Service System (HSS) Team Leaders meetings.

This year I also completed a Certificate in Aboriginal Narrative Practice, supported by Uniting Vic Tas. This supports my work with Boorndawan Willam Aboriginal Healing Service and to engage with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Island services in the region.

Anchor is in the process of developing a new and exciting position in the region, the first of its type in the East. This position will be focused on children within families experiencing homelessness and providing therapeutic care, case coordination and referral as required. I am very excited to be involved in the working group to develop this Specialist Therapeutic Worker Position. It would be wonderful to see more of these positions created in the East.

## Case Study Three

Kylan, a 15yr old boy, was struggling at school and to engage with his First Nation's culture.

A cultural camp was offered for young men to be together and learn cultural lore and "Men's Business"

The Homeless Children's Brokerage Program supported Kylan to attend this camp and to participate with all he needed to gain self-esteem, strength in culture and to understand the transition from boy to man in a new and supported way.



## WHAT'S NEXT?

Over this financial year I intend to focus on visiting agencies, out-posting to agencies and continuing training for practitioners. The development of the Child & Young People Focused MARAM Guides, new Child Safe Standards and a greater focus on the visibility of children in services will hopefully mean an increase in services committing to child focused training and support for practitioners. Our e-learn modules will roll out and we hope to be able to deliver our two day face to face training across the state again towards the end of 2023 or early 20234.

I hope to spend the Homeless Children's Brokerage more consistently through the financial year to avoid a large balance remaining in the last few months.

Thank you to Uniting and to all the agencies in the region for all your support of my role and of children and families coming into your services.

If you have ideas about ways that I can support your agency further, I am always happy to hear and talk about what will be helpful.

I look forward to supporting practitioners and agencies to improve outcomes for children's safety and wellbeing and building the capacity of practitioners to respond to children and their families with hope, confidence and creativity.

August 2023

