

Inner & Outer Eastern Statewide Children's Resource Program Yearly Report 2025-2026

I acknowledge I work on the lands and waters of the Wurrundjeri Woiwurrung people of the Kulin Nation and pay my deepest respect to Elders past and present. Sovereignty was never ceded; this always was and always will be Aboriginal land. I acknowledge Australia's First Nation People as the oldest living culture on earth and the first nurturers of children and young people on this land.



Message from the Inner & Outer Eastern Melbourne Statewide Children's Resource Program Coordinator

Welcome to the 2025-2026 Yearly Report for the
Statewide Children's Resource Program (SCRP) for Inner & Outer
Eastern Melbourne (IOEM).

Families across Victoria have continued to experience increasingly
expensive rental costs, utility and food prices with continuing low
wage growth.

There are significant community pressures and financial stresses on
families and individuals resulting in community services
experiencing high demand. This places agencies and practitioners
in the position of making stressful decisions around priorities.

All of the things that bring families into the community service sector have a
lesser or greater impact on children. Children tell us that often they do not
communicate the issues that worry them to their caregivers to avoid burdening
their already stressed caregivers.

This report offers information about the meaningful and thoughtful ways that
practitioners seek to use the Homeless Children's Brokerage Program (HCBP)
and to utilise other resources this program provides to support families and
children entering their services.

With the imminent release of the Child and Young Person MARAM tools by the
end of the year, my focus is firmly on supporting the Eastern region and the
practitioners who will be using these tools.

The Children's Network Meeting has regularly seen more than twenty
practitioners attend each meeting. While homelessness and family violence
services are represented, it is also great to have education, family services,
infant & child mental health services, Aboriginal controlled organisations, State
Schools Relief and more represented.

Thank you to Uniting Vic Tas, my auspice agency, for their support for me
attending the Australian Childhood Foundation Child Trauma Conference 2025
and to participate in the cross region activities of the SCRPP

Kindest Regards



Susie Lukis



The role of the SCRP is funded by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) to assist, resource and support Specialist Homelessness Support (SHS) services, including family and domestic violence agencies to respond effectively to the unique needs of infants, children and young people.

When I mention children in this report, I am always referring to infants, children and young people

The broad aim of the program is to align with the broad, core functions of the position across the state, while staying aware of and responsive to the local priorities and trends, as well as changes in the systemic and operational environments.

Our aim is to support agencies and individual practitioners in a flexible and accessible way. We also advocate for the inclusion of infants, children and young people in policy and systems.

This can look like;

- secondary consultations with practitioners
- no cost training and resource provision
- HCBP support and provision (& other options for financial support)
- Development of agency program
- Networking & advocacy

The SCRP works to build the capacity of practitioners to recognise the impacts of trauma on children, to provide child-focused and child safe assessments with strong engagement strategies. This can contribute to a skilled and sustainable work force.

Local agencies assist in informing local priorities and local activities and I encourage the input of the Eastern service system to inform my work in the region.

Brokerage data for the 2025-2026 financial year, in this region, is provided as well as several case studies highlighting the value of brokerage.

There is also an outline of my other work in the region and the networking opportunities I try and make the most of.

What Have the SCRP Been Up To?

During the 2025-2026 year, the SCRP increased the training with various TAFE s across the state. We have designed and delivered a full day session, focused on infant, children and young people's experiences of, primarily, homelessness and family violence, recognising that all the experiences that bring people into all the community services, impact infants, children and young people.

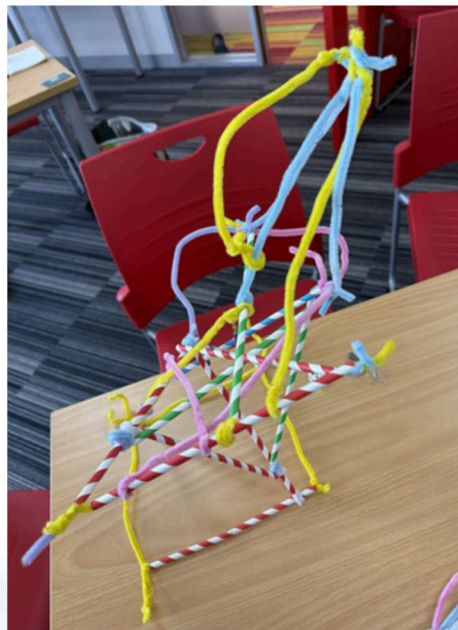
These days, provided at no cost, to educational facilities have supported Diploma of Community Services (both mainstream and VACCA focused) Cert IV Youth Work and Cert IV Mental Health to understand the impact on children of disrupted family functioning.

This work aligns with our capacity building role.

The feedback has been very positive. We are aware these are one-off sessions and hope that the seed is planted for children to be viewed as clients in their own right, their experiences recognised and responded to, as students move into services.

I provided support to my colleagues to deliver these as I already had the experience of delivering these sessions with Swinburne TAFE. It is very valuable for us all to have time in other regions. Understanding the different conditions, services and priorities of each region assists us all.

The training sessions are very interactive, practical and conversational, with a large number of resources shared.



The Brain Architecture Game-a model of a child's brain from birth to 8yrs of age.

Harvard University Brain Architecture Game [Centre on the Developing Child Brain Architecture Game](#)

Locally, I have continued to offer the three hour training to support infant, child and young person focused practice. Family Access Network, Integrated Family Services, and EACH Child Contact Centre have hosted this training. An SCRП colleague and I delivered a day of training through Council to Homeless Persons with very good feedback obtained.

Migrant Information Centre also took up the training offer and provided me with some valuable cultural insights that I have incorporated into the training I deliver.

The sessions I have delivered through Swinburne included several days with Victorian Aboriginal Child and Community Agency practitioners. One of these days was in Swinburne's beautiful cultural room, a really lovely space to train and learn together.

We have continued to add resources to the Practitioner Toolkit that are free for practitioners to download to share with each other and those engaged in services.

The SCRП were invited to review and provide feedback to the draft of the Children and Young Person's MARAM Tools, expected to be released in the next couple of months. My intention is to provide as much support to practitioners and agencies around having safe and appropriate conversations with children and their caregivers over the next few months in preparation of the release. This support will continue after the release, to complement the training around the tools provided by Family Safety Victoria. The SCRП contributed to Parity Magazine, and attended the launch of Shifting the Burden.



I have continued to be a part of the Eastern Regional Coordinator's (ERC) Group. This group presents the monthly Sector Spotlight series, providing practitioners with information about each of the service sectors in the region. Referral pathways, client eligibility and supports available are provided to complement the Eastern Navigation Guide , also developed by the ERCs. This resource is updated annually.

Brokerage Case Study One

David * is a 7year old boy who was struggling with behaviour regulation, partly because he is a child and also due to the violence he had experienced in his home. David regularly banged on things rhythmically. The practitioner working with the family contacted me for a secondary consult. It was decided to offer a term of drumming lessons for David. David loves drumming, has since had another term funded, along with a basic drum to use at home. David's mother reports David is more regulated, and will use his drum when he feels his big feelings are overwhelming.

*Name & identifying details changed



I remain part of the Emerging Minds Child Voice Community of Practice, bringing together child focused program managers from across Australia. There is strong input from the First Nation Community with an Elder attending all sessions and leading several a year. Last year I was invited to present on our program and our resources. Several states expressed the desire for a similar program in their own states.

I also continue to be a part of several of the Regional Family Violence Partnership (RFVP) Working Groups (WG). My term as Chair of the Children & Young Persons WG ended after 3yrs and I remain committed to being a part of this group. I am also involved in the RFVP Implementation and Therapeutic WGs.

The Homeless Children's Brokerage Program

The Homeless Children's Brokerage Program (HCBP) provides funds across Victoria, administered by the SCRP Coordinators in each region.

Infants, children and young people, engaged in ongoing case management with their family, in a Specialist Homelessness Support (SHS) service are eligible.

Children can access \$500 per child, per year, in a single application or multiple applications.

This program is designed to provide access to supports and participation that they may otherwise be unable to access. There are no visa requirements.

Broadly, the aims of the program are to;

- engage and maintain children in education, including early learning
- 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.

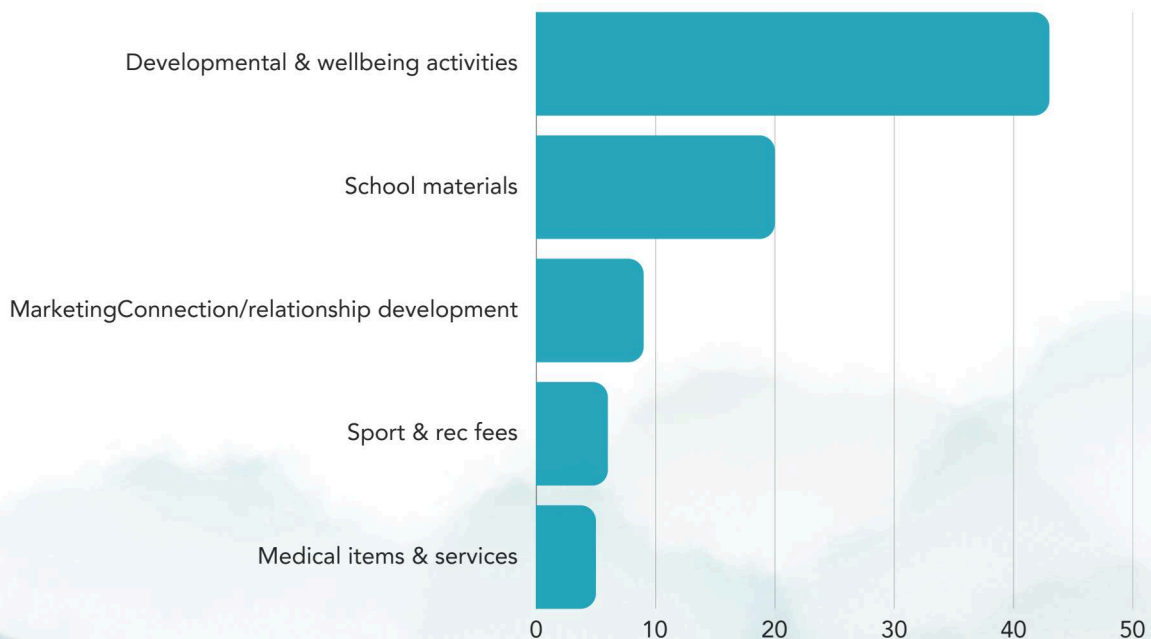
2025-2026 How was the money spent?

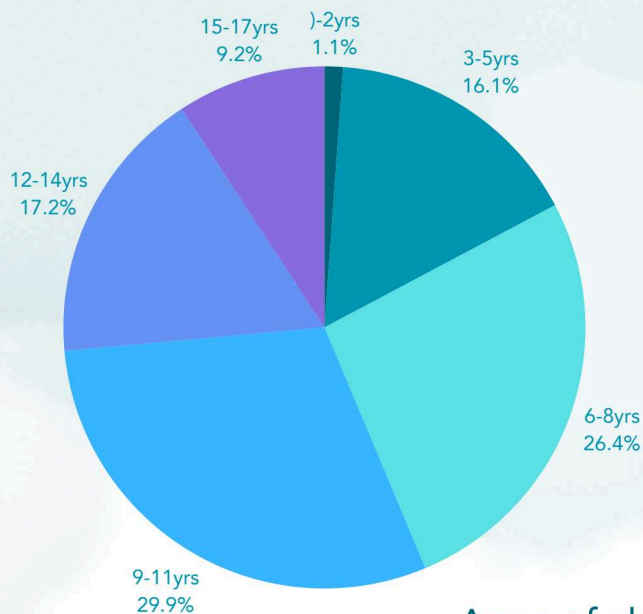
The financial year started with an amount of \$34,501.02.

There were 87 episodes of support were provided. Some children had multiple applications to reach the annual limit.

The top 5 uses of brokerage are below.

For the first time, all educational costs are not the highest cost. I believe this was due to the \$400 School Saving Bonus provided to each school age child in 2025.

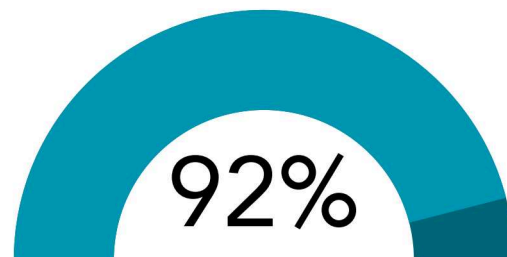




Ages of children accessing brokerage

This year, the 9-11yr age group was the leading age group to utilise brokerage.

Practitioners from 14 programs made applications.



92% of children had experienced family violence.

There is a growing awareness that if there is family violence occurring in a home, the children will always have an experience of it.

We have also had conversations with practitioners to encourage them to think about whether, maybe, if a family has left home due to domestic violence, that is the main presenting reason, rather than inadequate housing. When the data is extracted by AIHW, only the main presenting reason is captured so family violence can be undercounted, when it is so often the driver of homelessness, inadequate accommodation and over crowding.

We know also, that domestic and family violence remains the biggest driver of women and children being without a home.

Of eighty seven supports, eight children identified as Aboriginal and six children were born outside Australia.

Brokerage-an opportunity for a conversation



The brokerage provides a very useful way to support infants, children and young people in a range of ways, and this is definitely the focus. It provides practitioners the opportunity to have conversations with children, or their caregiver, about what is important to them and ways to creatively respond. This can support a child to feel a sense of belonging in their community and support the caregiver child relationship.

It provides other benefits too. There are opportunities to discuss with practitioners how they, and adult caregivers, understand the experiences of children presenting in families. Coaching of practitioners about having vulnerable, strength-based conversations with caregivers to support their understanding of their children's experiences, can occur.

Brokerage offers the opportunity for the practitioners to provide something for children, in the presence of all the things that practitioners (the system) cannot provide clients. This can assist in building the relationship of trust and belief that the practitioner is there to assist.

Programs that are ineligible to apply for my brokerage are welcome to contact me to discuss other financial support options that I am aware of.



Brokerage Case Study Two

11 year old Maisie* had seen her brother doing woodworking and decided she would like to do it too. Brokerage was able to pay for lessons and a starter kit for Maisie. Maisie's mother reported this was helping Maisie stay off her phone and to spend time with her brother in a happy way. Maisie was less stressed as was her mother.

*Name & identifying details changed

I have continued to attend the Eastern Homelessness Support Service Alliance (EHSSA) meetings and provide updates. I have also been a part of the Client Voice Working Group, developing a framework for the inclusion of the client voice in the work of the EHSSA. There is currently no funding to enable the employment of Client Voice Advocates.

For several years I have attended the State School Relief (SSR) Stakeholder Forums. In early 2026 I was invited to be a guest presenter at the SSR All Staff Day. This was a great opportunity to meet more of the staff and to thank them for the valuable work they do, despite never seeing the children and families who benefit so much from their work.

"The most useful part of the training was the safe space Susie provided and the building a brain activity."

Family Violence Practitioner-Training 2025

"My practice with children and families will change by remembering to have these conversations with caregivers that are strength-based and safe, using the cards and tools to support these conversations."

Integrated Family Services practitioner 2025

Brokerage Case Study 3

Star, 17, was living in transitional housing with their mother and siblings. Star was hoping to get their driver's license to drive to work and on weekends. Their grandparents had an older car that they were able to use.

The practitioner spoke with Star who was very keen to have some driving lessons, as no one in their family felt confident to teach them to drive.

The supporting practitioner applied for a number of driving lessons for Star. I was later notified that Star was very excited to have passed their driver's license at their first attempt.

*Name and identifying details changed



Looking Ahead: 2026-2027

For this financial year my focus is on supporting local practitioners and agencies to prepare for the release of the Child & Young Person MARAM tools.

Whilst no one will see the tools until they are released, and I cannot provide training on the tools themselves, I can provide training to support practitioners to build their confidence and capacity to have conversations with children, where safe and appropriate, or with their caregiver in ways that are strength based, align with MARAM and the Family Violence Information Sharing and Child Wellbeing Schemes.

This training is very interactive, provides a multitude of resources for practitioners to use in their work.

After the release of the tools, Family Safety Victoria (FSV) will provide training on the use of the tools only; they cannot provide any training around engaging with children and caregivers about children.

The Eastern region has a great opportunity to support practitioners with this learning before the tools come online.

I am also very keen to support practitioners and their clients to prepare for the end of the school year with the best supports and to minimise the stress of families.

The volume of work and the very challenging experiences clients face mean that practitioners are having to work in very creative ways, find ways that are very creative and maintain their compassion and commitment.

Once again I would like to thank Uniting for their support and encouragement, as auspice to this role. Auspice support makes a huge difference in how the role can respond, be creative and find ways to support the region.

Without the support of the agencies in this region I would have had a very much quieter year. Thankfully, practitioners continue to access this program and in doing so, build my knowledge.

I look forward to working to support agencies and practitioners to improve outcomes for children's wellbeing and safety, with confidence, creativity and hope.

October 2026

