

Progress against past inquiries

This document provides an update on the Department of Education and Department of Families, Fairness and Housing's responses to our recommendations from *Let us learn: Systemic inquiry into the educational experiences of children and young people in out-of-home care* (2023) and the Commission's assessment of progress made in 2024–25.

The Commission will continue to annually assess and report on progress made against these recommendations.

The inquiry report is available at <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/inquiries/systemic-inquiries/education-inquiry/>.

Let us learn

Systemic inquiry into the educational experiences of children and young people in out-of-home care

Progress against past inquiries: *Let us learn*

Rec #	Recommendation	Initial Government response	Department update	Commission assessment	Commission comment
1	That the Department of Education (DE) strengthen data collection for pre-school age children in out-of-home care through: • routinely collecting kindergarten attendance data to determine the participation rates of children in care • developing measures to track and evaluate the connection between improved attendance at kindergarten and school readiness including successful transition to primary school • advocating nationally for children in care to become an identified equity group in the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) to determine additional supports required to improve their school readiness.	Accept in principle Support the intent of this recommendation, noting further work required on feasible implementation approach.	This recommendation is in progress. DE currently collects and tracks attendance data for children supported through the Early Start Kindergarten program, which includes children in out-of-home care. In 2025, DE is implementing a new IT system called Arrival. It will start collecting attendance data from sessional kindergarten services (staged approach) across 2025. DE is exploring analysis of existing data sets for children in out-of-home care to better understand and support their transition to school, and has advocated to the Commonwealth to include out-of-home care as a recorded child characteristic in the 2027 AEDC data collection.	Progress made	The Commission welcomes the implementation of the new IT system, Arrival, that will enable attendance data to be collected from sessional kindergarten services across 2025. The Commission also notes the actions to support children in out-of-home care transition to school, and DE's efforts to advocate for out-of-home care to become a child characteristic in the 2027 AEDC data collection.
2	That DE monitor the extent to which government schools follow the Schools' guide to attendance, particularly the escalation processes and student support component of the guide, to inform whether implementation of the guide should be made mandatory.	Accept	This recommendation is in progress. DE continues to support schools to implement the elements of the Schools' guide to attendance. DE is currently trialling additional mechanisms for assessing schools' fidelity of implementation, which will inform a statewide monitoring approach.	Progress made	The Commission welcomes the work completed on this recommendation to date and looks forward to the schools' testing results and how this will inform a statewide monitoring approach.
3	That DE routinely collect a set of specific student wellbeing measures, to be used alongside students' academic results and attendance data, to identify and report on engagement levels for children and young people in out-of-home care. This should be reported under the Out-of-Home Care Education Commitment.	Accept	This recommendation is in progress. DE will consider measures for wellbeing such as those that have been agreed as metrics for the Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO) 2.0 and look at how these, together with academic results and attendance data, can be used to measure school engagement. Reporting mechanisms will be considered as part of the review of the Out-of-Home Care Education Commitment (Partnering Agreement) in order to incorporate school engagement reporting in the revised Agreement.	Not yet progressed	The Commission notes that work on this recommendation is linked to planning and progress on recommendation 38, and will be considered as part of the review of the Out-of-Home Care Education Commitment (Partnering Agreement).

Rec #	Recommendation	Initial Government response	Department update	Commission assessment	Commission comment
4	That when reviewing the Child Protection Operating Model, the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) consider barriers to the recruitment and retention of Child Protection practitioners, including sustainable and equitable workloads, and practitioner engagement and job satisfaction.	Accept in principle Actions will be subject to future funding decisions.	This recommendation is complete. The review of the Child Protection Operating Model (CPOM) workforce structure has been completed. Based on the review, a refreshed CPOM workforce structure has been implemented to improve staff supervision, case allocation, and retention of staff and robust case planning and risk assessment.	Completed	The Commission notes the review of the Child Protection Operating Model (CPOM) workforce structure has been completed and that a refreshed CPOM workforce structure has been implemented.
5	That DFFH enhance Child Protection's prioritisation of education for children and young people in out-of-home care by: - reviewing the current tools and resources available to Child Protection practitioners to ensure they adequately support educational engagement of children and young people in care through placement decisions, case planning and case management - strengthening guidance on Child Protection visits to education settings, including limiting these visits and visitations with parents during school and kindergarten hours to exceptional circumstances, and requiring Child Protection practitioners to seek and give weight to children's views about visits at school - providing ongoing professional development opportunities for Child Protection practitioners to strengthen their application of the Early Childhood Agreement for Children in Out-of-Home Care and the Out-of-Home Care Education Commitment and relationships with education settings - ensuring dedicated opportunities for reflective practice on education-related issues between Child Protection practitioners and LOOKOUT Centre staff.	Accept in principle Support the intent of the recommendations regarding Child Protection visits to education settings and will examine opportunities to improve practice and compliance with existing guidance but notes that a level of operational flexibility is required and there will continue to be circumstances where visits are required in the child's best interest and to acquit on legal obligations. Actions will be subject to future funding decisions.	This recommendation is in progress. 5.a) A review of the current tools and resources available to Child Protection practitioners to ensure they adequately support educational engagement of children and young people in care through placement decisions, case planning and case management has occurred. Seven pieces of practice advice have been identified as requiring updating – these updates will occur by the second half of 2025. 5.b) Guidance on Child Protection visits to educational settings will be drafted by 11 April 2025. The guidance when completed and uploaded to the <i>Child Protection Manual</i> , will be shared on the Child Protection Learning Hub by the second half of 2025. 5.c) On 17 March 2025, the Office of Professional Practice (OPP) facilitated a Practice Forum with Area based Principal Practitioners across the state. <i>Let us learn</i> was a focus of the forum as was recommendation 5.c and 5.d. To recommendation 5.d, the group shared about practices occurring from across the state in partnership with LOOKOUT, in addition to reflective practice, but intended to strengthen collaboration to meet the educational needs of children in care.	Progress made	The Commission welcomes the initiatives that have supported the implementation of this recommendation, including the associated professional development opportunities for Child Protection practitioners.

Rec #	Recommendation	Initial Government response	Department update	Commission assessment	Commission comment
6	That DFFH improve funding for and the quality of cultural plans, including greater funding for kinship finding services and directly funding Aboriginal community-controlled organisations (ACCOs) to implement activities within cultural plans.	Accept in principle Actions will be subject to future funding decisions.	This recommendation is in progress. DFFH continues to prioritise the completion of meaningful cultural plans in as timely a fashion as possible, subject to available funding and resourcing. Work is continuing over 2025 to develop a refreshed cultural plan model, led by the Victorian Aboriginal Child and Community Agency (VACCA) and overseen by the Aboriginal Children's Forum. This work commenced in 2024 and is intended to clarify roles and responsibilities, improve implementation and quality and lift compliance. Through this project, VACCA are working with the Cultural Planning State-wide Forum and the Aboriginal Children's Forum between August–October 2025 on outcomes from the review. DFFH and ACCOs will commence work in the coming months to consider the next phase of the project, including implementation. Work to support this recommendation is also continuing through implementation of the 2024–25 State Budget, which invested \$10.2 million over four years and \$2.8 ongoing to support cultural awareness and cultural planning through cultural adviser positions in DFFH and ACCOs. This investment is continuing to provide sustainable, culturally aware support to develop and deliver more timely and comprehensive cultural plans by Care Teams.	Progress made	The Commission notes the work in progress to develop a refreshed cultural plan model led by VACCA and overseen by the Aboriginal Children's Forum.
7	That the Victorian Government increase the care allowance payments for kinship and foster carers.	Further consider To be further considered as part of the annual state budget processes, in the context of competing investment priorities and broader economic conditions.	This recommendation has not commenced as it is resource dependent. Full implementation of the recommendation is subject to additional investment by government through the annual budget processes and therefore cannot be fully acquitted by DFFH at this time.	Not yet progressed	This is the one recommendation from <i>Let us learn</i> on which the government is yet to provide a clear position. The Commission reiterates the need for urgent action on this recommendation given the critical role of carers in the out-of-home care system and the support they provide to the children and young people in their care.

Progress against past inquiries: *Let us learn*

continued

Rec #	Recommendation	Initial Government response	Department update	Commission assessment	Commission comment
8	That DFFH strengthen the care allowance assessment and payment process to ensure assessments are conducted thoroughly and in a timely way, and that equitable financial support is provided to kinship and foster carers.	Accept in principle Actions will be subject to future funding decisions.	This recommendation is in progress. DFFH will continue to reinforce the policy requirement to assess care allowance levels based on the needs of the child or young person in care. DFFH will also review Care Allowance Policy and Procedures to consider areas for strengthening in relation to equality and timeliness. Full implementation of the recommendation is subject to additional investment by government through the annual budget processes and therefore cannot be fully acquitted by DFFH at this time.	Progress made	The Commission notes the DFFH's intentions to review the care allowance policy and procedure and that full implementation of this recommendation is subject to additional investment by government.
9	That DE ensure that carers of students in out-of-home care are not requested to pay voluntary financial contributions and education-related expenses, including camps and excursions.	Accept	This recommendation is in progress. Students in out-of-home care can access free uniform and other educational items through the Affordable School Uniforms program, delivered by State Schools' Relief. The Camps, Sports and Excursions Policy has been reviewed and updated to state that students living in out-of-home care will be eligible under the Special Considerations policy. The Parent Payments Policy will be updated with new language to clarify that carers of students in out-of-home care are not to receive requests for voluntary contributions.	Significant progress made	The Commission welcomes the planned policy change regarding voluntary contributions in Victorian public schools and other education-related expenses to better support carers.

Rec #	Recommendation	Initial Government response	Department update	Commission assessment	Commission comment
10	That DFFH: • ensure all carers and the children and young people in their care, particularly those in kinship care and in residential care settings, are provided with information about flexible funding available to cover education and extra-curricular activities • further streamline the process for seeking this funding.	Accept	This recommendation is in progress. DFFH in consultation with DE has developed a fact sheet on education related funding has been finalised. The fact sheet includes information on: • Early Start Kindergarten • State Schools Relief • Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund – Regional Education Support Network • Transport Accident Commission L2P program • Supports provided by non-government organisations including Backpacks 4 Kids, The Pyjama Foundation, Smith Family Foundation and Embrace Education Victoria • Commonwealth Additional Child Care Subsidy. The fact sheet will be distributed to new carers by the Care Support Help Desk, shared with carer peak bodies to distribute and publish on websites, shared with residential care providers and published on the department's website by end of August 2025. DE and DFFH will review processes for accessing state government education funding to identify ways to streamline access to these funds.	Significant progress made	The Commission notes the completion of a fact sheet on education-related funding to be distributed to new and existing carers, and published on DFFH's website.
11	That the Victorian Government provide all student aged children and young people in out-of-home care with a Victorian Student Travel Pass free of charge.	Accept in principle	This recommendation is in progress. Following the announcement in the 2025–26 State Budget, all Victorian children aged under 18, including those in out-of-home care, will receive public transport anywhere in Victoria, at anytime, for free. The initiative is set for implementation from 1 January 2026.	Significant progress made	The Commission welcomes the Victorian Government's recent announcement of free public transport for all Victorian children under the age of 18, to commence from 1 January 2026.

Rec #	Recommendation	Initial Government response	Department update	Commission assessment	Commission comment
12	That DFFH strengthen residential care workers' support for educational engagement of children and young people living in residential care settings by: • working with residential care providers to incorporate education-related information into their induction training for new residential care workers • working with the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare to support an education-related course to be made available to residential care workers as part of the Residential Care Learning and Development Strategy.	Accept	This recommendation is in progress. New online training on improving educational outcomes for young people in residential care was made available to residential care workers in February 2024 through the Residential Care Learning and Development Strategy. This training was developed in partnership with LOOKOUT Education Support Centres. Please see the online training programs at: https://www.cfecfw.org.au/learning-development/learning-and-development-programs/improving-edu-outcomes-people-residential-care/ In addition, the 2024 annual Resi Rocks forum focused on 'Nurturing the spark for education'. This forum was attended by over 500 residential care workers, along with representatives from DFFH and DE, to support information sharing and professional development. Please see more information at: https://www.cfecfw.org.au/resirocks2024-spark-education-residential-care/ To finalise this recommendation, the program requirements for residential care, subject to consultation, will include the provision of education-related information as part of induction training by Community Service Organisations (CSO) and ACCOs for new workers. The program requirements are expected to come into effect in 2025.	Progress made	The Commission welcomes the residential care worker training initiatives and program requirements for new workers to support educational engagement for children and young people living in residential care.

Rec #	Recommendation	Initial Government response	Department update	Commission assessment	Commission comment
13	That the Victorian Government advocate for the inclusion of effective trauma-informed and responsive teaching practices in initial teacher education programs as part of national reforms to improve teacher training. Trauma-informed practices should also be incorporated into early childhood educator training.	Accept	This recommendation is in progress. Schools: DE has advocated for the inclusion of trauma-informed teaching practices in initial teacher education (ITE) programs (school teaching degrees) through intergovernmental forums. DE continues to engage with the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) at the national level to advocate for the inclusion of trauma-informed teaching practices in ITE programs. DE also continues to meet regularly with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) and Victorian ITE providers and leverages these meetings to explore opportunities for inclusion of trauma-informed teaching practices within ITE programs. Early Childhood: While the Victorian Government cannot prescribe content and structure of initial teacher education and training packages relevant to the early childhood workforce, the following opportunities to advocate for trauma-informed practices to be embedded in early childhood teacher and educator training have been progressed: • research on how to effectively embed trauma-informed practice for early childhood professionals in Victoria • engaging with key stakeholders, including Victorian ITE providers, the Early Childhood TAFE Network, the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA), and HumanAbility to identify opportunities to strengthen trauma-informed practice training in early childhood teaching qualifications and ensure consideration in the review of VET ECEC qualifications <i>continued next page</i>	Significant progress made	The Commission notes significant work is underway to incorporate trauma-informed teaching practices into teacher training.

Rec #	Recommendation	Initial Government response	Department update	Commission assessment	Commission comment
13			<i>continued from previous page</i> - inclusion of a module on trauma-informed practice for early childhood educators in the Skilling and Adaptable Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce project, led by Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA) in collaboration with Gowrie Victoria. Funded by the Victorian Government, e-learning modules have been available to early childhood educators since April 2024 - supporting work being progressed through Action FA3-2 of Shaping Our Future, the National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy.		
14	That DE work to ensure that: - government schools adopt a 'whole school' approach to trauma and embed trauma-informed practices throughout their school environments as part of the implementation of FISO 2.0 in schools - trauma-informed training is offered as an option under School Readiness Funding for early years educators and other staff, and that early childhood education settings are encouraged to embed these practices into their operations.	Accept in principle Support the intent of this recommendation, noting further work required on feasible implementation approach in relation to government schools. School Readiness Funding component accepted in full.	This recommendation is in progress. DE is continuing to explore what is required to strengthen and embed trauma-informed practices across kindergarten settings and schools.	Planned for implementation	The Commission notes DE continues to explore what is required to strengthen and embed trauma-informed practices across kindergarten settings and schools. This is critically important work that has the potential to benefit not only students living in out-of-home care, but all students.

Rec #	Recommendation	Initial Government response	Department update	Commission assessment	Commission comment
15	That the Victorian Government fund programs across government schools to encourage students in out-of-home care to pursue post-secondary education and training and to improve access to such opportunities. Funded programs should include the elements provided in Raising Expectations, the Game Changers Transitions Peer Mentoring Program and the Level Up Peer Mentoring Program.	Accept in principle Requires further investment to fully acquit.	This recommendation is in progress. DE: The Enhanced My Career Insights (EMCI) pilot program encourages young people in care to explore their strengths, interests and aspirations through a series of one-on-one sessions with a qualified career practitioner over Years 9 and 10 to undertake the following activities: • career action planning and goal setting • exploration of senior secondary pathway options such as VCE, VCE VM, SBATs • exploration of work-based learning opportunities, including work readiness activities and work experience preparation • development of resumes and cover letters to seek part-time employment • guided reflection on post-work experience placements to consider future pathways. EMCI has been extended until end of 2026, which allows students to receive a full two years of support. There are now 58 schools engaged with the program across 63 campuses. More than 625 students have been referred into the program since it was launched in July 2024 and 55 of these students reside in out-of-home care. Early data is showing positive student engagement in the program with outcomes around work readiness, career action planning and future career conversations. Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR): Program data provided by the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (CFECFW) indicates there has been over 750 TAFE and university course completions since 2020, and there are currently over 1,240 participating care experienced students (as of mid-2025). DJSIR is using Raising Expectations program evaluation findings and regular program reports to inform support options for care experienced students through post-secondary pathways.	Progress made	The Commission welcomes the initiatives to support students in care to explore and pursue post-secondary education options and pathways.

Rec #	Recommendation	Initial Government response	Department update	Commission assessment	Commission comment
16	That DE require school leadership teams to participate in training on the out-of-home care system and the experiences of children and young people in care. This requirement should be triggered upon enrolment of a child or young person in out-of-home care in a government school.	Accept in part The Victorian Government accepts the commitment to providing school leadership teams with appropriate training, but requirements on mandatory school take up require further consideration.	This recommendation is in progress. A suite of courses and modules have been scoped through extensive consultation with a variety of stakeholders. The first module focused on the Care System has been developed and will be tested with schools in Term 3 2025 prior to further roll out. Additional modules will be completed by December 2025.	Progress made	The Commission welcomes the work to scope and develop a suite of training modules for school leadership teams. The Commission looks forward to updates after the testing of the first module, and the further roll out and completion of the additional modules.
17	That DE and DFFH strengthen the focus on carers in the Early Childhood Agreement for Children in Out-of-Home Care and the Out-of-Home Care Education Commitment to: • support carers to navigate school and early childhood education systems and enhance their capacity to advocate for children and young people in their care • build better connections between education settings and carers.	Accept	This recommendation is in progress. Stakeholder consultations to be undertaken in Stage 2 of the review of the early childhood and schools out-of-home care agreements will include a focus on improving supports for carers to navigate the early childhood and school systems. See recommendation 38 for more detail on the review.	Progress made	The Commission notes that work on this recommendation is linked to planning and progress on recommendation 38, and will be considered as part of the review of the Out-of-Home Care Education Commitment (Partnering Agreement).
18	That DE build the capacity and expertise of relevant school staff to support vulnerable students through a strengthened understanding of Child Protection, The Orange Door, and community services.	Accept	This recommendation is in progress. DE is working with DFFH to develop new guidance for schools on referral and reporting pathways to better direct children and their families to the right support at the right time. This includes pathways into The Orange Door and linkages with earlier intervention services working with families.	Progress made	The Commission welcomes the work to strengthen guidance for schools to help them better support children and young people and their families to be directed to the right supports at the right time.

Rec #	Recommendation	Initial Government response	Department update	Commission assessment	Commission comment
19	That DE develop a clear and distinct policy that explicitly addresses racism in Victorian Government education settings. Youth-friendly resources specifically for Aboriginal children and young people should also be developed to explain the policy and raise awareness of how to raise concerns about racism. The creation and design of these resources should be done in consultation with Aboriginal children and young people.	Accept	This recommendation is in progress. The anti-racism policy, guidance and resources were published in June 2025 on the departments' Policy Advisory Library and communicated to schools for implementation from the beginning of term 3, 2025. The policy outlines Victorian government schools' responsibilities to prevent and respond to racism, and provide inclusive and safe processes for students, families and carers to report racism. It will be accompanied by guidance and resources to support schools to build relevant capabilities to implement the policy effectively.	Significant progress made	The Commission welcomes the anti-racism policy and looks forward to the development of the resources to support its implementation in schools.
20	That DE conduct and publish an audit of the Report Racism Hotline to examine the types of complaints it receives and from whom, in addition to the effectiveness of processes for addressing complaints of racism.	Accept in part Analysis of issues raised through the Report Racism Hotline will inform broader work on strengthening the response to incidents of racism.	This recommendation is in progress. DE is developing an approach to analysis of issues reported through the Report Racism Hotline and other mechanisms to identify ways to strengthen responses to incidents of racism, and use insights from individual reports to inform broader improvements.	Planned for implementation	The Commission notes the identified work to strengthen responses to incidents of racism, and looks forward to future updates.
21	That DE implement the recommendations made in the EY Sweeney evaluation report of Community Understanding and Safety Training as a priority.	Accept	This recommendation is in progress. DE will continue to review the rollout of Community Understanding and Safety Training (CUST) and the implementation of the recommendations from the CUST evaluation. A professional learning suite is being developed to address the feedback from the Strengthening Aboriginal Self-Determination in Education report. This suite will complement the content in CUST. The learnings from the CUST evaluation will be used to support the development of the professional learning suite.	Progress made	The Commission notes the progress on the rollout of the Community Understanding and Safety Training, and welcomes the development of a complementary professional learning suite.

Progress against past inquiries: *Let us learn*

continued

Rec #	Recommendation	Initial Government response	Department update	Commission assessment	Commission comment
22	That DE develop youth relevant cultural understanding and safety content to further support progress towards culturally safe schools.	Accept	This recommendation is in progress. Following the release of the Strengthening Aboriginal Self-Determination in Education report and Possum Skin Statements, DE will continue supporting local engagement opportunities for Koorie young people. This will build on the momentum of the Campfire Conversations in amplifying the voices of Koorie young people, while also serving as a channel to test and scope ideas for youth-facing resources that promote cultural safety. Professional learning is being developed to support school and teacher engagement with the Possum Skin Statements from the report. The co-design process for the professional learning will utilise the feedback from the Campfire Conversations, focusing on feedback relating to cultural safety and responsiveness. The co-design workshops will highlight opportunities for potential resources for a range of audiences, including Koorie young people.	Progress made	The Commission welcomes the progress on testing and scoping ideas for youth-facing resources that promote cultural safety, the development of related professional learning, and the inclusion of Koorie young people in this work. The Commission looks forward to future updates relating to the development of these resources.

Rec #	Recommendation	Initial Government response	Department update	Commission assessment	Commission comment
23	That DE require government schools to report on measures they are implementing to improve cultural safety and address racism as part of their FISO 2.0 Annual Implementation Plans and Annual Report to the School Community.	Accept	The guidance under the Preventing and Addressing Racism in Schools policy outlines the importance of regular communication with the broader school community about the steps the school is taking to prevent and address racism, and encourages schools to utilise their annual report as part of their routine communication efforts. Schools must attest compliance with the Child Safe Standards (which includes actions to prevent and respond to racism, as per the Standards 1 and 5) in their annual report. Schools are advised that they can use their annual report to support communication with the community about proactive strategies they are implementing to promote a safe and inclusive learning environment. The Preventing and Addressing Racism in Schools policy also: • requires schools to report all incidents of racism to the department and recommends they report back on actions taken to the person who made the report • provides guidance to schools on responding and reporting, including a step-by-step guide • requires them to publish the policy on their website, alongside advice on what to do if racism has been experienced or witnessed including how to report incidents of racism to the school and via the Report Racism Hotline. The department has provided a template for schools' websites and newsletters when they publish the policy, which includes free-text sections about what the school is doing to create a culturally safe and inclusive environment.	Progress made	The Commission notes the link to recommendation 19, in the publication of policy, guidance and resources in June 2025 on the departments' Policy Advisory Library relating to preventing and addressing racism in schools. The Commission also notes that schools are encouraged to use their annual reports to report on the steps they are taking to prevent and address racism.

Rec #	Recommendation	Initial Government response	Department update	Commission assessment	Commission comment
24	That DE strengthen the educational support it provides in schools to Aboriginal students in out-of-home care.	Accept	This recommendation is in progress. Educational support for Koorie students in out-of-home care remains the responsibility of the school in which the student is enrolled. This is further supported by the engagement of a designated teacher within the school and support from LOOKOUT Centres. Each LOOKOUT Centre has a Koorie cultural advisor as part of their multi-disciplinary teams. These advisors work with students, community, case workers and schools to ensure Aboriginal students' needs are reflected in cultural plans, and that these are embedded in students' Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Further consideration will be given to LOOKOUT's role as part of the response to recommendations 39 and 40.	Progress made	The Commission welcomes progress to strengthen supports to Aboriginal students in out-of-home care. The Commission looks forward to future updates.

Rec #	Recommendation	Initial Government response	Department update	Commission assessment	Commission comment
25	That, as part of the development of DE's modified timetable policy, it provide clear instructions to government schools regarding: - the appropriate use of modified timetables that are in the best interests of the child and upholds children and young people's right to education - development of plans to return students to full-time schooling, including a specified date and review process - accurate attendance recording to ensure students on modified timetables are not reflected in the data as attending full-time. The policy should also require, in circumstances where modified timetables are implemented for students in out-of-home care, that: - consideration of the modified timetable is included in Student Support Group meetings and discussed with carers - the use of a modified timetable triggers consideration of targeted supports to facilitate a return to full-time school - approval is obtained from a senior departmental officer in consultation with the relevant LOOKOUT Centre. That DE also monitor schools' implementation of the modified timetable policy.	Accept in principle Support the intent of this recommendation. Further work will consider the feasibility of implementation of all elements.	This recommendation is in progress. Consultation with schools and external stakeholders on prevalence of, and issues related to, modified timetables and proposed directions for policy has been completed. Policy and associated guidance have been drafted and are currently being finalised for release to schools in Term 3 2025. Implementation will be monitored and feedback sought from a range of stakeholders over 2025 to assess impact of policy changes.	Progress made	The Commission notes the work completed to date on developing a modified timetable policy and looks forward to further updates to understand how this recommendation has been incorporated into the policy to better support the educational engagement of students in care.

Rec #	Recommendation	Initial Government response	Department update	Commission assessment	Commission comment
26	That DE update its suspensions policy to: • implement an appropriate process to ensure that suspensions in primary schools only occur in exceptional circumstances and as a last resort • ensure the suspension triggers an urgent assessment of appropriate supports required to address student behaviour • require suspensions of children and young people in out-of-home care to be reported immediately to a senior departmental officer and the relevant LOOKOUT Centre to prompt consultation about alternative interventions and supports to address student behaviour • monitor and review schools' implementation of post-suspension Student Support Group (SSG) meetings to determine whether they occur and how effectively these support the re-engagement of students.	Accept in principle Support the intent of this recommendation. Further work will consider the feasibility of implementation of all elements.	This recommendation is in progress. DE has commenced a review of its Suspensions policy for government schools to inform consideration of any required changes. Stakeholder engagement will continue during 2025 to ensure outcomes align with the intent of the recommendation.	Progress made	The Commission welcomes the commencement of a review of the suspensions policy for government schools, which includes stakeholder engagement, and looks forward to future updates.
27	That DE review schools' reasons for sending students home early to understand the regularity of schools using informal suspensions, the implications for students and their caregivers, and to inform what other supports are required in schools to reduce this practice.	Accept in principle Support the intent of this recommendation. Further work will consider the feasibility of implementation of all elements.	This recommendation is in progress. DE is analysing data to better understand practice that could be considered as informal suspensions. Consideration of any policy and guidance improvements will be undertaken as part of DE's broader Suspension Policy review.	Progress made	The Commission welcomes the analysis of data to better understand the occurrence of informal suspensions in Victorian public schools.
28	That the Minister for Health implement a process to ensure consideration of the impact on children's rights, safety, and wellbeing before making (or varying, extending, or revoking) pandemic orders and to include these considerations when publishing their Statement of Reasons for the making of pandemic orders.	Accept	This recommendation is in progress. Policy review and updated process and templates for pandemic orders to consider the impact on the rights, safety and wellbeing of noted priority populations when making, varying, extending or revoking pandemic orders is considered as part of the pandemic preparedness policy development process.	Planned for implementation	The Commission notes the plan to review the policy and update process and templates for pandemic orders and looks forward to further updates once the review has commenced.

Rec #	Recommendation	Initial Government response	Department update	Commission assessment	Commission comment
29	That DE develop guidelines to ensure it can measure and report on the number of students who disengage during or immediately after periods of major disruption to education services.	Accept	This recommendation is in progress. DE has improved data and reporting for out-of-home care students by integrating new data into existing databases and dashboards. This integration improves data accuracy and timeliness, and facilitates reporting for out-of-home care. DE has also completed early scoping for an Emergency Management engagement dashboard that will enable monitoring of student engagement during and after emergency events. DE is currently working to improve the methods used to identify schools and students impacted by emergency incidents. DE is currently engaging stakeholders across the department to ensure the Emergency Management engagement dashboard is fit for purpose and meets the need identified by the Commission for Children and Young People.	Progress made	The Commission welcomes the work that has been done to improve data and reporting for students in out-of-home care. The Commission notes the progress relating to an Emergency Management engagement dashboard and looks forward to future updates.
30	That DE strengthen in-school supports for children and young people in out-of-home care by reviewing the Student Support Group process to ensure that student voice is a key component of goal setting and review, and that it is strengths-based. This review should be conducted in collaboration with children and young people in care and the LOOKOUT Centres.	Accept	This recommendation is in progress. DE has been working in collaboration with VACCA and the Victorian Aboriginal Children and Young People's Alliance (VACYPA) to enhance understanding and support for students, carers and school staff in relation to the processes involved in Student Support Group (SSG) meetings.	Significant progress made	The Commission welcomes the collaborative approach taken to improve SSG processes to ensure they are meaningful and support children and young people in care and their carers.

Rec #	Recommendation	Initial Government response	Department update	Commission assessment	Commission comment
31	That DE, DFFH and partners of the Wungurilwil Gapgapduir working group strengthen the requirements in the Out-of-Home Care Education Commitment for relevant information from Aboriginal students' cultural plans to be shared by care teams and case managers with education settings to inform their Individual Education Plan and cultural connections in schools and early childhood education centres.	Accept in principle Support the intent of the recommendation, noting implementation approach is subject to consultation and codesign with Aboriginal community and partners.	This recommendation is in progress. The Cultural Support Plan is the student's private document and the student's consent (when age appropriate) is required to share relevant information from the Cultural Support Plan with the school. The Partnering Agreement review will consider the most appropriate way to reflect the need to seek consent to share relevant information through the case manager to the Student Support Group for this to inform the student's Individual Education Plan and planning for cultural connections in schools. Through both the Partnering Agreement Review and the current ACCO-led refresh of the cultural plan model underway this year, DE and DFFH will work together to consider next steps to support this recommendation.	Planned for implementation	The Commission looks forward to updates from DE and DFFH regarding next steps to support implementation of this recommendation.
32	That as part of the review of the Educational Needs Analysis (ENA) model, DE and DFFH review the ENA assessment process and resourcing for primary, secondary and specialist school students to ensure: • children and young people undergo an assessment soon after and no later than 90 days from when they enter out-of-home care to determine their educational needs and whether they require additional one-on-one support • schools receive financial support to implement ENA recommendations for any enrolled children and young people in care • additional funding is provided for appropriate behaviour assessments as required.	Accept in principle Actions will be subject to future funding decisions.	This recommendation is in progress. DE has completed a review of the ENA process. The findings from this review are being used to develop the future model, with a pilot planned for Term 3 2025. Insights from this pilot will inform the approach for 2026. The 2025–26 State Budget included a further \$30.7 million over four years to continue educational supports for children and young people in out-of-home care. This investment includes additional funding for the educational needs analysis over two years to ensure the needs of students in out-of-home care are properly understood and inform the supports provided to engage in the classroom.	Significant progress made	The Commission welcomes the progress on this recommendation, including the pilot of the new ENA model and the additional funding received in the 2025–26 budget to ensure students in care receive the supports outlined in their ENAs.

Rec #	Recommendation	Initial Government response	Department update	Commission assessment	Commission comment
33	That DE, in collaboration with the LOOKOUT Centres, conduct a review of the designated teacher role to strengthen capacity to effectively fulfil the role's functions under the Out-of-Home Care Education Commitment (Partnering Agreement). The review should consider: • which positions in schools should be assigned the Designated Teacher role and what time allowance should be provided to undertake the role's functions • improving awareness of the role and its purpose among children and young people in out-of-home care to enhance their understanding of the Partnering Agreement and the supports available to them in schools • any necessary improvements to the Designated Teacher training • options to build a network of Designated Teachers and communities of practice.	Accept	This recommendation has not yet commenced. Implementation of this recommendation will be sequenced so it is informed by the outcomes of the Partnering Agreement review.	Not yet progressed	The Commission notes that work has not yet been progressed on this recommendation.

Rec #	Recommendation	Initial Government response	Department update	Commission assessment	Commission comment
34	That DE and DFFH, through LOOKOUT Centres, review current enrolment processes and develop a best practice tool for use across Victoria to ensure that children and young people in out-of-home care receive the appropriate supports when starting at a new school.	Accept	This recommendation is in progress. Updates have been made to DE's enrolment policy to better support schools and families: - the definition of 'sibling' now includes children in residential care - the definition of 'exceptional circumstances' under compassionate grounds now includes students in out-of-home care - determining permanent residence guidance now clarifies that children in out-of-home care may be unable to provide proof of address and must not be unfairly disadvantaged. Updates to transfers guidance are proposed to be made in 2025, referencing the Partnering Agreement and clarifying that students in out-of-home care must be enrolled without delay. DE will continue engaging with key stakeholders to identify and refine opportunities to support improved tools to strengthen enrolment for students in out-of-home care.	Progress made	The Commission welcomes the ongoing work to strengthen school enrolment processes for children and young people in care, acknowledging the importance of supported transitions when starting at a new school.
35	That DE and DFFH assess the feasibility of integrating Student Insight and the Client Relationship Information System to ensure government schools receive real time information about the care arrangements for children and young people in out-of-home care.	Accept	This recommendation is in progress. DE's project to implement improved data sharing with DFFH has been delivered. Assessment of the feasibility of further integration enhancements has commenced and is expected to be completed in 2026–27.	Significant progress made	The Commission welcomes the system improvements made to support improved data sharing between DE and DFFH, and looks forward to the outcome of feasibility assessments for further enhancements in future years.
36	That DE resource and expedite the roll-out of Student Insight and ensure that the system stores all information relevant to student learning and appropriate oversight of record keeping and information sharing.	Accept in principle Actions will be subject to future funding decisions.	This recommendation is in progress. Student Insight technical enhancements have been performed and usability enhancements are underway in readiness for further deployment to more schools in 2026.	Progress made	The Commission welcomes the work to enhance Student Insight and the planned rollout to additional schools.

Rec #	Recommendation	Initial Government response	Department update	Commission assessment	Commission comment
37	That when reviewing reporting requirements under the Out-of-Home Care Education Commitment, DE consider measures to track educational engagement and improved education and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people in out-of-home care.	Accept	This recommendation is in progress. Reporting mechanisms are being considered as part of the review of the Out-of-Home Care Education Commitment (Partnering Agreement).	Not yet progressed	The Commission notes that work on this recommendation is linked to planning and progress on recommendation 38, and will be considered as part of the review of the Out-of-home Care Education Commitment (Partnering Agreement).
38	That DE and DFFH conduct a comprehensive review of the Early Childhood Agreement for Children in Out-of-Home Care and the Out-of-Home Care Education Commitment (Partnering Agreement) to clarify their purpose and strengthen collaboration between key partners, including by: - streamlining and elevating the current governance structure (ideally to be jointly chaired by the Secretaries of DE and DFFH) - reviewing and clarifying the roles and accountabilities of signatories to the Agreements - where necessary, expanding reporting requirements to reflect signatories' obligations under the Agreements and to measure performance, for example, information sharing responsibilities of case managers - ensuring reporting requirements of the Partnering Agreement are met and moving to public reporting on compliance and student outcome data - considering the scope, including whether the Partnering Agreement should include a focus on children and young people in out-of-home care who are disengaged from education, those in care transitioning from Secure Care and Youth Justice settings, and those who have recently been reunified with their parents.	Accept	This recommendation is in progress. DE is leading the response to review and strengthen the Early Childhood Agreement for Children in Out-of-Home Care and the Out-of-Home Care Education Commitment (Partnering Agreement), with input and support from the DFFH and DH. The review is being undertaken over three stages. Stage 1 (Q4 2024–Q1 2025) Internal consultations (complete): In February 2025, DE completed consultations internal to government across key departments. Stage 2 (Q1 2025–Q3 2025) External consultations: Preparation for external consultations is underway. Engagement with current external signatories to the Agreements and other key stakeholders is due to commence in Q3 2025. Stage 3 (Q3 2025) DE will work with other departments to draft the revised agreement.	Progress made	The Commission notes DE's planned approach to review the Early Childhood Agreement for Children in Out-of-Home Care and the Out-of-Home Care Education Commitment (Partnering Agreement), with the support of DFFH and DH, and looks forward to reviewing the proposed revised agreements.

Progress against past inquiries: *Let us learn*

continued

Rec #	Recommendation	Initial Government response	Department update	Commission assessment	Commission comment
39	That, as part of the review of the Early Childhood Agreement for Children in Out-of-Home Care and the Out-of-Home Care Education Commitment, DE identify resource requirements for the LOOKOUT Centres to enable an effective combination of school capacity building and accountability.	Accept	This recommendation is in progress. DE continues to assess the resourcing of LOOKOUT, including seeking additional funding through state budget processes where appropriate. The 2025–26 State Budget included funding for the continuation of essential LOOKOUT Centre capacity to work with schools to improve educational outcomes for students in out-of-home care, and the critical LOOKOUT Streamlining access officer roles to build system capacity to support young children known to child protection to engage with early learning.	Not yet progressed	The Commission notes that this recommendation is subject to the review of the partnering agreement (recommendation 38).
40	That the Victorian Government provide additional funding to the LOOKOUT Centres based on the review of resource requirements referred to in recommendation 39.	Accept in principle Actions will be subject to future funding decisions.	This recommendation is in progress. DE continues to assess the resourcing of LOOKOUT, including seeking additional funding through state budget processes where appropriate. The 2025–26 State Budget included funding for the continuation of essential LOOKOUT Centre capacity to work with schools to improve educational outcomes for students in out-of-home care, and the critical LOOKOUT Streamlining access officer roles to build system capacity to support young children known to child protection to engage with early learning.	Not yet progressed	The Commission notes that implementation of this recommendation has not yet progressed and is dependent on the work and outcomes of recommendations 38 and 39, and is subject to government funding. In the interim, the Commission welcomes the Victorian Government's budget commitment regarding the continuation of essential LOOKOUT Centre capacity to work with schools.
41	That the movement of students in out-of-home care between mainstream settings and FLOs be tracked with the intention of benchmarking and improving, over time, how students are meeting their agreed Individual Education Plans, including progressing to desired pathways of education.	Accept	This recommendation is in progress. DE has implemented a new mechanism within CASES21 to better identify and track students who move into flexible learning options and back into mainstream government schools.	Significant progress made	The Commission welcomes the progress that has been made in relation to this recommendation.

Rec #	Recommendation	Initial Government response	Department update	Commission assessment	Commission comment
42	That in its review of alternative education settings, DE: • ensure that good practice is captured, shared, and replicated • uplift the quality of support and education provided where needed, including through the provision of adequate resourcing • track student outcomes, including movement between Flexible Learning Options (FLOs) and mainstream schools • review the policy settings to ensure decisions on the provision of alternative education (including FLOs, re-engagement programs and attendance at non-school senior secondary and foundation secondary providers) are in the best interests of a child or young person in out-of-home care.	Accept in principle Actions will be subject to future funding decisions.	This recommendation is in progress. DE has completed its review of complementary education settings and it is now being considered by government.	Progress made	The Commission notes the completion of the review and awaits the outcome of government's consideration.
43	That DE and DFFH monitor the transitions of children and young people from Secure Care and Youth Justice settings to education settings as part of the Out-of-Home Care Education Commitment to ensure they comply with departmental guidelines and ensure that appropriate supports for re-engagement with education are provided.	Accept	This recommendation is in progress. DE will continue to monitor processes in place to transition young people from Youth Justice and Secure Care settings. Any future amendments to the transition process will be considered as part of the broader review of the Partnering Agreement currently underway (as detailed against recommendation 38).	Progress made	The Commission notes that work on this recommendation is linked to planning and progress for recommendation 38.
44	That DE create opportunities for schools and FLOs, including those in alternative settings provided by independent and Catholic schools, to share best practice approaches to flexible learning.	Accept	This recommendation is in progress. DE has completed its review of complementary education settings and it is now being considered by government.	Progress made	The Commission notes the completion of the review, which incorporates identification of opportunities to share good practice, and awaits the outcome of the government's consideration.

Rec #	Recommendation	Initial Government response	Department update	Commission assessment	Commission comment
45	That the Victorian Government review resourcing for and access to one-to-one education supports provided to children and young people in out-of-home care to enable: - manageable caseloads for one-to-one teaching support - needs-based access for all children and young people in care across the state.	Accept in principle Actions will be subject to future funding decisions. Note teacher workforce constraints may impact on timing of and approach to implementation.	This recommendation is in progress. As part of the Victorian Government's commitment of \$10.7 million over 18 months, the Education Support for Children in Care (ESCC) pilot program was launched in September 2024. ESCC provides individualised education and learning support, including one-on-one tutoring to children and young people in care who are disengaged or at risk of disengaging from school. These supports are delivered by a qualified teacher and are available for up to 500 students across Outer Eastern Melbourne, Inner Gippsland, North East Melbourne and Central Highlands pilot areas. Consistent with DFFH's commitment to self-determination and proportionate funding, this includes support for 164 Aboriginal students, delivered by or in partnership with ACCOs. A supplier has been engaged to undertake the evaluation of the pilot program from April through to August 2025. The evaluation will be in two parts. A formative evaluation will provide learning on implementation, test fidelity of delivery against the program requirements and garner any early indications of impact on children and young people's literacy and numeracy achievement. The summative evaluation will seek to understand efficiency, effectiveness and appropriateness of the model to support children and young people to re-engage in learning, including improvements in literacy and numeracy. <i>continued next page</i>	Significant progress made	The Commission welcomes the government's commitment to support children and young people in out-of-home care with individualised education and learning support via the Education Support for Children in Care (ESCC) program. The Commission looks forward to hearing the outcome of the evaluation and future of this critical initiative.

Rec #	Recommendation	Initial Government response	Department update	Commission assessment	Commission comment
45			<i>continued from previous page</i> Evaluation outcomes will inform future government funding decisions about program continuation and expansion. The 2025–26 State Budget included a further \$30.7 million over four years to continue educational supports for children and young people in out-of-home care. This investment includes: • funding for the ESCC program (delivered by DFFH) to continue to provide individual education support to up to 500 students in out-of-home care per year for two years • additional funding for educational needs analysis to ensure the needs of students in out-of-home care are properly understood and inform the supports provided to engage in the classroom • continuation of essential LOOKOUT Centre capacity to work with schools. See announcement at https://www.budget.vic.gov.au/investing-our-kids-and-their-classrooms and detail at Budget Paper 3: Service Delivery (page 15, Table 1.7–Output initiatives–Education).		
46	That one-to-one teaching support for children and young people in out-of-home care that is funded by the Victorian Government: • be provided by qualified teachers • include a focus on literacy and numeracy • include advocacy for a child or young person in relevant meetings, including in Student Support Group and care team meetings • involve liaison with other workers and carers to encourage educational engagement • be provided flexibly across placement changes by the same teacher.	Accept in principle Actions will be subject to future funding decisions. Note teacher workforce constraints may impact on timing of and approach to implementation.	This recommendation is in progress. The five recommended points are a part of the ESCC program described in response to recommendation 45.	Significant progress made	The Commission is pleased the government is committed to providing educational support for children and young people in out-of-home-care and looks forward to further updates about the effectiveness of ESCC.

Rec #	Recommendation	Initial Government response	Department update	Commission assessment	Commission comment
47	That DE and DFFH collaborate so that all relevant information about children and young people in out-of-home care, including chronic absences, Individual Education Plan progress, Student Support Group meetings and Educational Needs Analysis recommendations are used to ensure that referrals to one-to-one education supports are made in a timely and appropriate way, rather than after a child or young person has already disengaged.	Accept in principle Actions will be subject to future funding decisions. Note teacher workforce constraints may impact on timing of and approach to implementation.	This recommendation is in progress. DFFH and DE are continuing to collaborate to streamline information-sharing about children and young people in care to enable prompt and appropriate referrals for education supports. recommendation 34 is informing work on other recommendations such as the Educational Needs Analysis review and implementation of one-on-one tutoring supports. The pilot of Education Supports for Children in Care (ESCC) was launched in September 2024. An evaluation will take place from April 2025 to analyse implementation of the pilot, including referral processes. The 2025–26 State Budget included a further \$30.7 million over four years to continue educational supports for children and young people in out-of-home care, as outlined in response to recommendation 45.	Progress made	The Commission welcomes collaborative work between the two departments to improve the timeliness and appropriateness of referrals to one-to-one education supports for children in care.