

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 2025–26.

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

Rec No.	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 to determine additional supports required to improve their school readiness.	Accept in principle	This recommendation is in progress. The Arrival system, introduced in 2025, supports the collection and reporting of kindergarten attendance data, including for national reporting as part of the Commonwealth-State Preschool Reform Agreement. The collection of detailed attendance data supports targeted initiatives to maximise inclusion and attendance for all children including priority cohorts such as First Nations children and children who have had contact with child protection. Implementation of digital attendance data collection and reporting has been undertaken in a staged approach to support kindergarten services to adopt this new process. DE is continuing to explore analysis of existing data sets for children in out-of-home care to better understand and support their transition to school, and to explore linking these to attendance data when a full set is available. DE is linking out-of-home care information to assessment information on child developmental vulnerabilities in Prep through the Student Entrant Health Questionnaire and investigate how this relates to participation in kindergarten. The next Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) data collection will occur in 2027, with the Commonwealth currently considering additional data items including the identification of children in out-of-home care as a nationally collected item. Decisions on changes to the AEDC will be known late in 2026.	Significant progress made	The Commission welcomes the continued implementation of the Arrival system, which is enabling the regular collection of kindergarten attendance data. The Commission also notes the continued work in DE to better understand and support the effective transition of children in out-of-home care from kindergarten to primary school and awaits the decision about whether children in care will become a nationally collected item through the AEDC.

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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's Schools Guide to Attendance (the Guide) outlines practical strategies that schools can take to engage with students and families, monitor and follow up on attendance and provide additional support for students who require it. The Guide is supporting schools to strengthen their whole-school approach to attendance. Updated attendance resources were published on the department's Policy Advisory Library in term 1, 2026 to support schools to implement the Guide and DE is currently analysing a range of data to gather insights on how schools are using the Guide.	Significant progress made	The Commission notes the updates to school attendance resources at the beginning of 2026 and looks forward to the outcomes of DE's analysis to understand how schools are using the guide to improve attendance of students in care.
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 Education Commitment.	Accept	This recommendation is in progress. DE provides annual attendance data to CCYP. Other wellbeing measures will be considered as part of the consideration of the future Out-of-Home Care Education Commitment (Partnering Agreement) in order to incorporate school engagement reporting in the revised Agreement.	Progress made	The Commission notes that work on this recommendation is being considered as part of the review of the Out-of-Home Care Education Commitment (Partnering Agreement), which will include incorporation of school engagement reporting in the revised Agreement.
4	That when reviewing the Child Protection Operating Model, 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	This recommendation was completed in the last reporting cycle.	Completed	N/A

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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	All parts of recommendation 5 are now complete with the publication of strengthened practice guidance for child protection practitioners relating to 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. Professional development opportunities for child protection have been enabled through the Child Protection Practice Forum held in September 2025, and the launch of the Early Childhood Education and Care eLearn in November 2025.	Completed	The Commission acknowledges the implementation of this recommendation, which includes strengthened guidance and professional development to Child Protection practitioners about visiting students in care during school hours and respecting their views about visits at school. This is important for supporting the educational engagement of children and young people in care.
6	That DFFH improve funding for and the quality of cultural plans, including greater funding for kinship finding services and directly funding ACCOs to implement activities within cultural plans.	Accept in Principle	This recommendation is in progress and has focused to date on progressing ACCO-led proposed revisions to Cultural Planning that can be delivered within existing resources. Engagement with governance forums is underway to consider ACCO-led proposed revisions to Cultural Planning to support progression to implementation and is subject to approval. Further enhancements to kinship finding services or greater funding for ACCOs to implement activities within cultural plans, would be subject to funding.	Progress made	The Commission welcomes the continued work to progress this recommendation, noting the broader ACCO-led proposed revisions to Cultural Planning for Aboriginal children and young people in out-of-home care.

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7	That the Victorian Government increase the care allowance payments for kinship and foster carers.	Further consider	The 2026–27 State Budget provides investment of \$14.9 million to respond to cost-of-living pressures for carers. This will provide for indexation of care allowance payment rates by 3.5% in 2026–27, in line with the projected change in the Consumer Price Index for 2026–27. 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 review the Care Allowance Policy to consider areas for strengthening in relation to equity and timeliness.	Progress made	The Commission acknowledges the recent 3.5% increase in the care allowance but notes that Victoria's allowance remains one of the lowest in Australia.
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	This recommendation is in progress. DE has issued internal guidance based on current policy to support consistent decision making on care allowance levels for kinship and foster carers and will continue to reinforce existing policy regarding the assessment of care allowance levels based on the needs of the child or young person in care. DFFH is undertaking targeted work in 2026 to update the Care Allowance Policy and Procedures.	Progress made	The Commission notes the continued internal work underway to support consistent decision making on care allowance levels and to update the Care Allowance Policy and Procedures.
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 complete. DE's Parent Payments Policy has been updated to clarify that voluntary contributions cannot be sought from carers of students in out-of-home care. Affordable School Uniforms provides free uniform items and other essential school items to students in government schools who are experiencing financial disadvantage and other forms of hardship to enable their full and equal participation in schooling. Out-of-home care is included as a specific eligibility category in the Affordable School Uniforms application form for schools to select when appropriate. This builds on the work already undertaken in 2025 to update the Camps, Sports and Excursions Policy to ensure that students living in out-of-home care be eligible under the Special Considerations policy.	Completed	The Commission notes the completion of this recommendation and welcomes the extension of this work to include out-of-home care as an eligibility category in the Affordable School Uniforms application form.

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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 finalised a Fact Sheet on education related funding. 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 June 2026.	Significant progress made	The Commission welcomes the initiatives to support the implementation of this recommendation, including the completion and distribution of a fact sheet to carers and expanding the eligibility of the State Schools Relief to include students in out-of-home care. The Commission notes the ongoing discussions between DE and DFFH about other opportunities to streamline processes to better support carers.
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 complete Public transport in Victoria is now free for all children under the age of 18, including students in out-of-home care. Students in out-of-home care over the age of 18 can still access free public transport through the Students in Crisis program.	Completed	The Commission acknowledges the completion of this recommendation, noting the Victorian Government committed to providing free public transport to all children and young people under the age of 18 in the last reporting cycle.

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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-developmentprograms/improving-edu-outcomes-peopleresidential-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 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and Department of Education, to support information sharing and professional development. Please see more information at: https://www.cfecfw.org.au/resirocks2024-sparkededucation-residential-care/ To finalise this recommendation, the program requirements for residential care have been updated to 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 in the process of finalisation and are expected to come into effect in late 2026.	Significant progress made	The Commission welcomes the continued efforts to strengthen the capacity of residential carers to support the educational engagement of children and young people living in residential care. The Commission notes that education-related material is now a required component of CSO and ACCO induction training for new residential care workers.

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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: The Victorian Government continues to use available levers for incorporation of trauma-informed practices in teacher training, while acknowledging the limits of its ability to directly prescribe course content for ITE providers. • Trauma-informed practice is a part of all partnership agreements between initial teacher education (ITE) providers and DE in the 11 Placements Plus programs as well as a feature of many of the DE-funded employment-based programs with 8 ITE providers. One Victorian ITE provider (Deakin University) has now incorporated trauma-informed practice across all ITE programs. • DE has advocated for the inclusion of trauma-informed teaching practices in ITE programs (school teaching degrees) through intergovernmental forums. • DE will continue to work with AITSL to advocate for the inclusion of effective trauma-informed and responsive teaching practices in ITE programs as part of these revisions to the Accreditation Standards and Procedures. <i>continued next page</i>	Significant progress made	The Commission notes the continued work to incorporate trauma-informed teaching practices into teacher training and DE's advocacy for trauma-informed practices to be embedded in early childhood teacher and educator training.

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13			<i>continued from previous page</i> 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, through the development of a pilot project in Geelong to test how to embed trauma-informed practice content across the delivery of the Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care. • 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. As outlined above, Deakin University has now incorporated trauma-informed practice across all ITE programs, including Early Childhood ITE programs. • As part of a Review of the Certificate III and Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care, HumanAbility is considering specific units to promote trauma-informed practice. As of April 2026, these are currently in draft form and will be finalised based on public feedback. HumanAbility are also conducting targeted research on microcredentials in the ECEC sector to be completed by the end of 2027, as part of Action FA3-2 of Shaping Our Future, the National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy.		

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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	This recommendation is in progress. DE has furthered its understanding of what is required to strengthen and embed trauma-informed practices across kindergarten settings and schools and continues to build on this knowledge to strengthen practice. More than 700 school principals completed a survey seeking their views on existing school practice and preferences for how DE strengthens and embeds trauma-informed practices. Analysis of existing programs and practice materials available to kindergarten settings and schools has been completed, including analysis of School Readiness Funding menu items relating to trauma-informed practice. Survey results and analysis will inform next steps on developing guidance and resources to strengthen and embed trauma-informed practices.	Progress made	The Commission acknowledges DE's progress on this recommendation, including surveying more than 700 school principals about their views on existing school practice and embedding trauma-informed practices in school settings, and the completed analysis of existing programs and materials available to kindergarten settings and schools. The Commission is interested to see how these findings will inform DE's next steps in developing guidance and resources to strengthen and embed trauma-informed practices.

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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	This recommendation is in progress. DJSIR: Program data provided by the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (CFECFW) for Raising Expectations indicates there has been over 998 TAFE and university course completions since 2020, and there are currently over 1,371 participating care experienced students at eight Victorian TAFE and universities (as of Dec 2025). 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 will run until the end of 2026, which allows students to receive a full two years of support. There are now 60 schools engaged with the program across 65 campuses. 1291 students have been referred into the program since it was launched in July 2024 and 141 of these students reside in OOHC.	Significant progress made	The Commission welcomes the continued success of Raising Expectations and the EMCI pilot program in supporting students in care to understand their interests and aspirations and pursue post-secondary education options and pathways.

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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	This recommendation is in progress. The project timeline was extended to allow for more in-depth consultation and input, including a meeting between the Minister for Education and the Ministerial Youth Advisory Group. The suite of courses and modules have been developed and will be tested to allow for refinement.	Progress made	The Commission welcomes the development of the suite of modules for Learning Advisers and Designated Teachers, noting that many school principals take on this role. The Commission acknowledges the modules were developed in consultation with the Ministerial Youth Advisory Group and looks forward to further updates once the modules are finalised and rolled out.
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. Work to support carers to navigate school and early childhood education systems, enhance their capacity to advocate for children and young people in their care, and build better connections between education settings and carers continues to progress independent of the Partnering Agreements review. DE funds the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (the Centre) to deliver Early Start Bright Future project to build better connections between early years services and families. DE also funded three positions employed at the Centre, VACCA, and the Victorian Aboriginal Children and Young People's Alliance. Their responsibilities included developing materials to support carers and professionals to: • improve their understanding of the partnering agreements • better support children and young people's educational engagement • effectively and confidently advocate for children and young people in their care • better understand early childhood and school education systems and services.	Significant progress made	The Commission welcomes the progress on this recommendation, including the funding of three positions across the different organisations to develop materials to enhance carers' understanding of early childhood and school education systems and services and strengthen their confidence and skill in advocating for the children and young people in their care. This is key to building better connections between carers and educational settings and supporting educational engagement.

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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 complete. DE has worked closely with Department of Families Fairness and Housing to refresh the PROTECT guidance to support schools to identify and respond to child abuse and connect students and their families to the right support at the right time. PROTECT provides clearer advice on when to support, refer and when to report – to ensure students and their families are connected to the right support at the right time. It also helps schools to support students and their families to self-refer to The Orange Door to help them get the support they need. Refreshed guidance was launched on 24 March 2026.	Completed	The Commission welcomes the completion of this recommendation. As addressed in our systemic inquiry <i>Left behind</i> , strengthening the capacity of universal services, such as schools, to enable early help to children and young people and their families as needs arise is important to reducing risk and experiences of harm for children and young people.
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	The Preventing and Addressing Racism in Schools policy, with guidance and resources, was introduced in all government schools from the beginning of Term 3, 2025. The policy is available from the department's Policy Advisory Library here: https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/preventing-addressing-racism-schools/policy Work is underway to co-design youth friendly resources specifically for, and with, Aboriginal children and young people that explain the policy and raise awareness of how to raise concerns about racism. This project will be in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Education Associated Incorporated (VAEI).	Significant progress made	The Commission welcomes the introduction of the Preventing and Addressing Racism in Schools in 2025 and looks forward to updates about the VAEI's development of youth friendly resources for, and with, Aboriginal children and young people, that will explain the policy and how to raise concerns about racism.

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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	DE has commenced a process for analysis of reports of racism received through the Report Racism Hotline along with reports made via other channels, in order to drive improvement to response to incidents of racism. A range of improvements have been implemented to ensure appropriate oversight and response, which complement the additional resources, supports and requirements set out in the department's Preventing and Addressing Racism in Schools policy. Work will continue to ensure that reports received through the Report Racism Hotline and other channels are used to inform broader improvements.	Progress made	The Commission notes the identified work to better respond to incidents of racism and looks forward to future updates about how this work is progressing.
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 continues to implement the recommendations from the Community Understanding and Safety Training (CUST) evaluation. Recommendations 1, 3, 5 and 6 have been implemented and maintained. Recommendation 4 continues to be implemented through the leadership of the KEW. Recommendation 2 continues to be implemented through the development of the <i>Bringing Change Together: First Nations Learning Suite</i>. The suite addresses feedback from Campfire Conversations and the first tranche of modules was launched in May 2026 and is open to all sectors.	Significant progress made	The Commission welcomes the implementation of four recommendations from the Community Understanding and Safety Training evaluation, noting that continued work is underway to implement the two remaining recommendations.

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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. The <i>Bringing Change Together: First Nations Learning Suite</i> was launched in May 2026 and includes a module to support school and teacher engagement with the Possum Skin Statements from the Strengthening Aboriginal Self-determination in Education report. A series of short videos have been produced and will be released in the coming months that unpack the 5 core connections from the Self-Determination in Education Reform framework – identity, culture, family, community and belonging. Additional resources will continue to be scoped and developed following the release of the videos.	Significant progress made	The Commission welcomes the continued work to progress the professional learning to support school engagement with the Possum Skin Statements and looks forward to the release of the related videos in 2026.

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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	Actions have been taken to implement the intent of this recommendation. 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 CSS 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 initial report to the school • 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. DE 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 various avenues whereby schools can report to the broader school community about actions taken to improve cultural safety and address racism in their school environments. This includes required reporting on compliance with Child Safe Standards 1 and 5 (actions to prevent and respond to racism) in their annual reports.

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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 continues to be 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. Further consideration will be given to LOOKOUT's role as part of the response to recommendations 39 and 40.	Progress made	The Commission notes the continued work to support Aboriginal students in out-of-home care, noting that LOOKOUT's role in this area will be considered as part of DE's response to recommendations 39 and 40.
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	This recommendation is complete. DE released a new policy on modified timetables (MTs) on the Policy Advisory Library (PAL) in late 2025 and implementation commenced in schools from term 1, 2026. The policy sets out the requirements for schools implementing a modified (reduced hours) timetable for an individual student. A modified timetable is a time-limited arrangement agreed between a school, a student (where appropriate), and their parent/carer to enable a student to attend school for reduced hours. The policy release has been supported by the introduction of a new absence reporting code to support central and area monitoring of schools' policy implementation.	Significant progress made	The Commission welcomes the introduction of the Modified Timetables Policy in schools from early 2026 and the accompanying new absence report code to support monitoring activity. As students in care are placed on modified timetables more than other students, it is critical that DE closely monitor the application of the policy to these students and where further supports may be required to improve educational engagement.

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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 meetings to determine whether they occur and how effectively these support the re-engagement of students.	Accept in principle	This recommendation is in progress. DE has progressed the suspension policy review, with a focus on internal consultations and linkages to department approaches to behaviour. This is informing work in progress to strengthen key areas of improvement to policy, guidance and resources.	Progress made	The Commission notes the continued work to progress the suspension policy review 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	This recommendation has been completed. The department undertook analysis from available CASES21 data. While a small number of instances indicating informal suspensions were identified, the prevalence of informal suspensions was not able to be quantified from the non-representative data sample available. The department will continue to support schools to promote positive behaviour and respond appropriately to challenging behaviour, identifying opportunities through the suspension policy review to strengthen guidance and practice.	Completed	The Commission notes the limitations to completing this recommendation as intended given the limited data available to comprehensively understand the use of informal suspensions by schools. The Commission reinforces the importance of having formal oversight of all school practices that are used to manage challenging student behaviours and which might contribute to students' disengagement from education.
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 has been completed. The policy and process for creating pandemic orders have been updated and includes acknowledgement of recommendation 28 under this inquiry, to consider the specific impact of pandemic orders on the rights, safety and wellbeing of vulnerable groups, including children in the making of orders.	Completed	The Commission notes the completion of this recommendation and welcomes the changes made to require consideration of the impact on children's rights, safety and wellbeing when making pandemic orders.

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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	DE have completed a DRAFT dashboard that can identify schools and students impacted by emergency incidents. The dashboard then joins impacted students to key engagement measures with the goal of rapidly identifying students that are disengaging from school and education. The dashboard allows for cohorts such as OOHc to be explicitly identified for this reporting. DE is in the process of socialising the draft dashboard to determine its suitability and to validate the chosen engagement measures.	Significant progress made	The Commission welcomes the continued work on the draft dashboard that identifies schools and students, including those in care, who are impacted by emergency incidents and which links to key engagement measures. The Commission looks forward to future updates about the effectiveness of the dashboard.
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 continues working in collaboration with the Victorian Aboriginal Child and Community Agency (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 notes the continued work between DE, VACCA and VACYPA to complete this recommendation.
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	This recommendation is in progress. DE and DFFH will continue to work together, and with Aboriginal communities and key partners, to consider the steps required to support implementation of this recommendation. Implementation will be guided by consultation and co-design with Aboriginal community and partners. A self-determined approach is required to ensure that any sharing of Cultural Plans is culturally safe, purposeful, and responsive to the needs of the child or young person. Cultural Plans contain information about a child or young person's identity. For this reason, any sharing of Cultural Plans should be carefully considered and should occur in a way that protects the integrity of the Plan and upholds the rights and voice of the child, young person, their family and community.	Progress made	The Commission acknowledges the work that has commenced on progressing this recommendation, noting the importance of self-determination in sharing any component of an Aboriginal child or young person's cultural plan for education purposes. The Commission reiterates that Aboriginal children and young people's educational experiences, including their Individual Education Plans, can be enriched with links to their culture, cultural aspirations and cultural supports in education settings.

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Rec No.	Recommendation	Initial Government response	Department update	Commission assessment	Commission comment
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	This recommendation is in progress. The Learner Profile (OOHC) Pilot was implemented in 3 areas of Victoria in Term 3 2025 and in 2026 there was an expansion to 4 more areas. Learnings from the first stage of the pilot have been applied across all participating areas, including working closely with Student Support Services to improve collaborative practices and working with child protection on timely information sharing at the local level. Insights from this trial will inform changes to the ENA assessment process and resourcing statewide from 2027 onwards.	Significant progress made	The Commission acknowledges the expanded implementation of the Learner Profile (OOHC) Pilot and the application of initial learnings to strengthen collaborative practice. The Commission looks forward to future updates about the pilot outcomes and how it will be progressed from 2027.
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 is in progress. A DE statewide LOOKOUT workforce Working Group has been established to research and propose recommendations. A survey of Designated Teachers has been conducted and is informing the development of a Designated Teachers Practice Guide.	Significant progress made	The Commission notes that work has commenced on this recommendation and looks forward to future updates from DE about how the Practice Guide and support for the Designated Teacher role in schools are progressing.

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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 the DE 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 OOHC. • Policy guidance now clarifies that children in OOHC may be unable to provide proof of address and must not be unfairly disadvantaged. DE will continue engaging with key stakeholders to identify and refine opportunities to support improved tools to strengthen enrolment for students in OOHC.	Significant progress made	The Commission acknowledges the updates to DE's enrolment policy to better support children and young people in care and looks forward to updates about other opportunities to strengthen enrolment processes.
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. DFFH and DE have progressed information-sharing about children and young people in care with the first phase of the data exchange completed in October 2025. A weekly data extraction and exchange between DE and DFFH provides information about children in care, including placement and school enrolment information. Work to determine scope and project timelines for phase two has been undertaken with a planned completion at the end of 2027.	Significant progress made	The Commission welcomes the completion of the first phase of data exchange between DFFH and DE about children and young people in care, noting that phase two is scheduled for completion in 2027. The Commission also acknowledges the regular extraction and exchange of placement and enrolment information for children and young people in care between DFFH and DE.
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	Student Insight Digital Enrolment now in use at all mainstream schools in North East and South East Victorian Regions. Remaining mainstream schools to be included in 2027 deployment.	Significant progress made	The Commission acknowledges the roll out of Student Insight Digital Enrolment in specific regions and looks forward to updates about its implementation in other areas in 2027 and other opportunities to capture data about students in care in Student Insight.

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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. Educational engagement and improved education and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people in out-of-home care will be considered as part of the development of future directions for the Out of Home Care Education Commitment, including consideration of the reporting framework that will be part of the Supporting Stable and Strong Families scheme. This will enable consideration of the student's school engagement in future reporting.	Progress made	The Commission notes that some of this recommendation will be informed by the broader consideration of future directions for the Partnering Agreement. The Commission also acknowledges the matching of the OOH Survey with attendance data for students in care, which will enable consideration of educational engagement outcomes at an aggregate level.
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 to 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. Legislation to establish the Supporting Stable and Strong Families reform passed Parliament in March 2026. This establishes shared responsibilities across government to provide necessary support for vulnerable children, young persons and families, including children and young people in out-of-home care. This new legislation, due to commence in September 2026, has strong alignment with the objectives of the OOH Review. DFFH and DE are actively considering the best way to take forward the Out-of-Home Care Partnering Agreements, and how they should relate to the Supporting Stable and Strong Families reform, including new Supporting Stable and Strong Families Plans, governance and accountability structures. Consultation undertaken to date will inform the proposed way forward.	Progress made	The Commission looks forward to updates about the future direction of the review of the Partnering Agreements in the context of the Supporting Stable and Strong Families reforms. The Commission reiterates the importance of the Agreements, with the support of LOOKOUT, in promoting a greater focus on the educational needs of children and young people in care and strengthening collaborative practices across departments and agencies.

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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. As part of Supporting Stable and Strong Families implementation and monitoring, DE will consider how the Supporting Stable and Strong Families Plans, governance and accountability structures impact the role of LOOKOUT Centres to enhance school and early learning centres capability and accountability. This will inform future consideration of resource requirements for LOOKOUT.	Not yet progressed	The Commission notes that progress on this recommendation is yet to commence and looks forward to updates about the future direction of the LOOKOUT Centres and the Partnering Agreements in the context of the Supporting Stable and Strong Families reforms.
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	Not yet progressed. Consideration of the future resourcing for LOOKOUT will occur after the assessment of the need for additional resources (as per recommendation 39).	Not yet progressed	The Commission notes that progress on this recommendation is yet to commence and looks forward to updates about the future direction of the LOOKOUT Centres and the Partnering Agreements in the context of the Supporting Stable and Strong Families reforms.
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. Systems are in place that enable schools to record a student's movement into a flexible learning option and a mainstream setting. Movement in and out of flexible settings is monitored by DE regional teams.	Significant progress made	The Commission notes that DE regional teams can monitor the movement of students between mainstream and flexible settings. It is important this data is used to monitor the educational engagement and outcomes for students in care who are moving between the two.
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 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	This recommendation is in progress. DE has completed its review of Complementary Education Settings. The report from the Review remains under consideration by government.	Progress made	The Commission notes the completion of the review and calls for the report's public release in addition to the outcomes of the Victorian Government's consideration.

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Rec No.	Recommendation	Initial Government response	Department update	Commission assessment	Commission comment
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 has processes in place to support and monitor the transition of young people from Youth Justice and Secure Care settings and ensure that DE guidelines are complied with and appropriate re-engagement supports are provided. DE is taking steps to strengthen oversight of these transitions. In Secure Care through enhanced requirements in the DE-DFFH MoU currently under review, and in Youth Justice through greater information sharing between Parkville College and the central and regional DE teams focused on young people's education as they transition in and out of custody.	Progress made	The Commission welcomes the progress on this recommendation, including DE's work to strengthen oversight of transitions from Secure Care (with DFFH) and Parkville College (with Youth Justice). As highlighted in the Commission's <i>With us, not against us</i> systemic inquiry, supporting the educational engagement of children and young people experiencing significant vulnerability, such as involvement in the criminal justice system, is critical to reducing the risk of future criminalisation and harm.
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. In 2026 the department is collating and developing best practice resources to help school leaders and practitioners optimise education and wellbeing practice in complementary education settings.	Progress made	The Commission notes that work on this recommendation has progressed and looks forward to seeing the best practice resources that seek to strengthen education and wellbeing practice in complementary education settings.

Rec No.	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	This recommendation is in progress. As part of the Victorian Government's commitment of \$10.7 million over 18 months, the Education Supports for Children in Care (ESCC) pilot program was launched in September 2024. The 2025–26 State Budget included investment to extend the ESCC pilot until the end of 2027. 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 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. Anecdotal information and case studies is indicating that ESCC is having a positive impact for the majority of children and young people engaged in the program. The summative evaluation has commenced and will inform future government funding decisions about program continuation and expansion. Continuation and potential expansion of the ESCC program beyond 2027 would require additional government investment.	Significant progress made	The Commission acknowledges the significant progress towards this recommendation and recommendation 46. The Commission welcomes the commitment to provide one-to-one education supports for children and young people in care through the ESCC pilot program, and looks forward to seeing the evaluation results, noting the positive anecdotal evidence about ESCC's impact.

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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	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 acknowledges the significant progress towards this recommendation and recommendation 45. The Commission welcomes the commitment to provide one-to-one education supports for children and young people in care through the ESCC pilot program, and looks forward to seeing the evaluation results, noting the positive anecdotal evidence about ESCC's impact.
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	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.	Progress made	The Commission notes the efforts of DE and DFFH to enable timely referrals for children and young people in care to receive education supports through the ESCC pilot program.