

With us, not against us

JULY 2026

About our report

Children need safety, belonging and connection. They need access to opportunities and supports that help them to grow, learn and thrive.

But right now, in Victoria, too many children experiencing significant vulnerability are criminalised at an early age instead of receiving support that would make a difference in their lives.

That is why we established *With us, not against us: A systemic inquiry to learn from the experiences of children who entered the criminal justice system before 14*.

We found that, even though the numbers are small, too many children experience long-lasting harms from contact with the criminal justice system, including from negative and sometimes violent interactions with police, multiple episodes of remand and harmful practices in custody.

The inquiry also highlighted that the criminal justice system disproportionately impacts Aboriginal children, their families, and communities, as well as children from other communities that experience racism and marginalisation.

Building on existing evidence and the experiences of children and young people, *With us, not against us* sets out 15 recommendations about how systems can respond earlier, collectively and more effectively so Victoria can better support children, prevent future harm, and build stronger and safer communities.

It calls for changes to keep children under 14 out of the criminal justice system and deliver timely responses that are evidence-based, therapeutic and right for their age and development.

It also calls for improved outcomes for children and young people in youth justice custody by making it safer and more effective to reduce the likelihood of future offending.

We trust *With us, not against us* will inform efforts to improve long-term outcomes for children, families and communities through prioritising prevention, early support and tailored responses that address children's needs, culture and context.

[Find out more about our inquiry >](#)

Liam's story

At the heart of *With us, not against us* are the experiences of children and young people, and what happened in their lives before they entered the criminal justice system.

Many children experienced significant harm and disadvantage, including abuse, neglect, family violence, disrupted education and housing insecurity.

'Liam' was one of the children who contributed to the inquiry. He shared his story and what would have made a difference in his life in the hope of making things better for other children.

Share the report

We have prepared some copy to accompany the animation or report image so you can share it on your social media channels or in your e-newsletters to help us create awareness of the complex issues that children and young people in the justice system face.

You can also tag the Commission with the following handles:



Commission for Children
and Young People



@ccyp_vic

Suggested copy - animation

The Commission for Children and Young People has released their latest systemic inquiry report *With us, not against us*. The inquiry was established to learn from the experiences of children who entered the criminal justice system before 14.

With us, not against us sets out 15 recommendations about how systems can respond earlier, collectively and more effectively so Victoria can better support children, prevent future harm, and build stronger and safer communities.

The animation of Liam's story brings these experiences to life.

Liam's story is one of many. It's a true story about a child in our community who entered the criminal justice system at an early age.

Liam's story shows us what would have made a difference in his life. And what could have helped keep him out of the criminal justice system.

These are the things that can make a difference in other children's lives, and help create safer communities, now and in the future.

Watch Liam's story on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/ABqRogn7dTA>

Suggested copy - report

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The Commission established *With us, not against us* to learn from the experiences of children who entered the criminal justice system before 14. Because right now, in Victoria, too many children experiencing significant vulnerability are criminalised at an early age instead of receiving support that would make a difference in their lives.

Building on existing evidence and the experiences of children and young people, *With us, not against us* sets out 15 recommendations about how systems can respond earlier, collectively and more effectively so Victoria can better support children, prevent future harm, and build stronger communities.

Read the full report: ccyp.vic.gov.au/inquiries/systemic-inquiries/criminal-justice-inquiry

Social media tiles

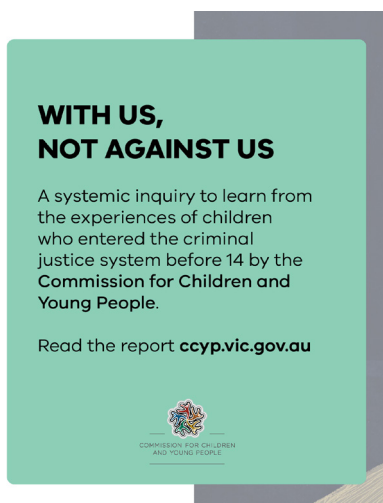
Dimensions: 1080 x 1080px

Best for Instagram and Facebook - Download [Tile 1](#) and [Tile 2](#)



Dimensions: 1200 x 627px

Best for LinkedIn - Download [Tile 1](#) and [Tile 2](#)



Contact us

If you need more information, you can contact us directly at contact@ccyp.vic.gov.au

The Commission for Children and Young People promotes improvement in policies and practices affecting the safety and wellbeing of Victorian children and young people.

Our vision is for the rights of all children and young people in Victoria to be recognised, respected and defended.